POEMS

BY

W. B. YEATS

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He who tastes a crust of bread tastes all the stars and all the heavens."—Theophrastus Paracelsus.

"The Wanderings of Oisin" was published with the lyrics now collected under the title "Crossways" in 1888, "The Countess Cathleen" with the lyrics now collected under the title "The Rose" in 1892, and the "Land of Heart's Desire" by itself in 1894. They were revised and reprinted in one volume in 1895, again revised and reprinted in 1899, and again reprinted in 1901, 1904, 1908, 1912, 1913, 1919, 1920, 1922 (*twice*), 1923, 1924, 1927 and 1929.

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

PREFACE

THIS volume contains what is, I hope, the final text of the poems of my youth; and yet it may not be, seeing that in it are not only the revisions from my "Early Poems and Stories," published last year, but quite new revisions on which my heart is greatly set. One is always cutting out the dead wood.

I have enclosed in brackets those passages in "The Land of Heart's Desire" which are omitted when it is played at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and I hope the amateurs, who perform this play more often than any other of mine, will accept my guidance and omit them also.

W. B. YEATS.

PREFACE TO THE SEVENTH EDITION

DURING the last year I have spent much time altering "The Countess Cathleen" and "The Land of Heart's Desire" that they might be a part of the repertory of the Abbey Theatre. I had written them before I had any practical experience, and I knew from the performance of the one in Dublin in 1899 and of the other in London in 1894 that they were full of defects. But in their new shape—and each play has been twice played during the winter—they have given me some pleasure, and are, I think, easier to play effectively than my later plays, depending less upon the players and more upon the producer, both having been imagined more for variety of stage-picture than variety of mood in the player. It was, indeed, the first performance of "The Countess Cathleen," when our stage-pictures were made out of poor conventional scenery and hired costumes, that set me writing plays where all would depend upon the player. The first two scenes of the present version of the play are wholly new, and though I have left the old end, I have given in the notes an endless

difficult to producer and audience, and there are slight alterations elsewhere in the poem. "The Land of Heart's Desire," besides some mending in the details, has been thrown back in time because the metrical speech would have sounded unreal if spoken in a country cottage now that we have so many dialect comedies. The shades of Mrs. Fallan and Mrs. Dillane and of Dan Bourke and the Tramp would have seemed too boisterous or too vivid for shades made cold and distant with the artifice of verse.

W. B. YEATS.

1912.

CONTENTS

TO SOME I HAVE TALKED WITH BY THE FIRE

While I wrought out these fitful Danaan rhymes,
My heart would brim with dreams about the times
When we bent down above the fading coals;
And talked of the dark folk, who live in souls
Of passionate men, like bats in the dead trees;
And of the wayward twilight companies,
Who sigh with mingled sorrow and content,
Because their blossoming dreams have never bent
Under the fruit of evil and of good:
And of the embattled flaming multitude
Who rise, wing above wing, flame above flame,
And, like a storm, cry the Ineffable Name,
And with the clashing of their sword blades make
A rapturous music, till the morning break,
And the white hush end all but the loud beat
Of their long wings, the flash of their white feet.

THE COUNTESS CATHLEEN

The sorrowful are dumb for thee.

Lament of Morion Shehone for Miss Mary Bourke.

To

MAUD GONNE

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

SHEMUS RUA	A Peasant
MARY	His Wife
TEIG	His Son
ALEEL	A Poet
THE COUNTESS CATHLEEN	
OONA	Her Foster Mother

Two Demons disguised as Merchants

Peasants, Servants, Angelical Beings

The Scene is laid in Ireland and in old times

SCENE I

SCENE.—*A room with lighted fire, and a door into the open air, through which one sees, perhaps, the trees of a wood and these trees should be painted in flat colour upon a gold or diapered sky. The walls are of one colour. The scene should have the effect of missal painting.* MARY, *a woman of forty years or so, is grinding a quern.*

MARY

What can have made the grey hen flutter so?

(TEIG, *a boy of fourteen, is coming in with turf which he lays beside the hearth.*)

TEIG

They say that now the land is famine struck
The graves are walking.

MARY

There is something that the hen hears

TEIG

And that is not the worst; at Tubber-vanach

A woman met a man with ears spread out,
And they moved up and down like a bat's wing.

MARY

What can have kept your father all this while?

TEIG

Two night's ago, at Carrick-orus churchyard,
A herdsman met a man who had no mouth,
Nor eyes, nor ears! his face a wall of flesh;
He saw him plainly by the light of the moon.

MARY

Look out, and tell me if your father's coming.
(TEIG *goes to door.*)

TEIG

Mother!

MARY

What is it?

TEIG

In the bush beyond,
There are two birds—if you can call them birds—
I could not see them rightly for the leaves.

But they've the shape and colour of horned owls
And I'm half certain they've a human face.

MARY

Mother of God, defend us!

TEIG

They're looking at me.
What is the good of praying? father says.
God and the Mother of God have dropped asleep.
What do they care, he says, though the whole land
Squeal like a rabbit under a weasel's tooth?

MARY

You'll bring misfortune with your blasphemies
Upon your father, or yourself, or me.
Would God that he were home—ah, there he is.

(SHEMUS *comes in.*

What was it kept you in the wood? You know
I cannot get all sorts of accidents
Out of my mind till you are home again.

SHEMUS

I'm in no mood to listen to your clatter.
Although I tramped the woods for half a day,

I've taken nothing, for the very rats,
Badgers, and hedgehogs seem to have died of drought,
And there was scarce a wind in the parched leaves.

TEIG

Then you have brought no dinner.

SHEMUS

After that
I sat among the beggars at the cross-roads,
And held a hollow hand among the others.

MARY

What, did you beg?

SHEMUS

I had no chance to beg,
For when the beggars saw me they cried out
They would not have another share their alms,
And hunted me away with sticks and stones.

TEIG

You said that you would bring us food or money.

SHEMUS.

What's in the house?

TEIG

A bit of mouldy bread.

MARY

There's flour enough to make another loaf.

TEIG

And when that's gone?

MARY

There is the hen in the coop.

SHEMUS

My curse upon the beggars, my curse upon them!

TEIG

And the last penny gone.

SHEMUS

When the hen's gone,
What can we do but live on sorrel and dock,
And dandelion, till our mouths are green?

MARY

God, that to this hour's found bit and sup,
Will cater for us still.

SHEMUS

His kitchen's bare.
There were five doors that I looked through this day
And saw the dead and not a soul to wake them

MARY

Maybe He'd have us die because He knows,
When the ear is stopped and when the eye is stopped,
That every wicked sight is hid from the eye,
And all fool talk from the ear.

SHEMUS

Who's passing there?
And mocking us with music?

(A stringed instrument without.)

TEIG

A young man plays it,
There's an old woman and a lady with him.

SHEMUS

What is the trouble of the poor to her?
Nothing at all or a harsh radishy sauce
For the day's meat.

MARY

God's pity on the rich.

Had we been through as many doors, and seen
The dishes standing on the polished wood
In the wax candle light, we'd be as hard,
And there's the needle's eye at the end of all.

SHEMUS

My curse upon the rich.

TEIG

They're coming here.

SHEMUS

Then down upon that stool, down quick, I say,
And call up a whey face and a whining voice,
And let your head be bowed upon your knees.

MARY

Had I but time to put the place to rights.
(CATHLEEN, OONA, *and* ALEEL *enter.*)

CATHLEEN

God save all here. There is a certain house,
An old grey castle with a kitchen garden,
A cider orchard and a plot for flowers,
Somewhere among these woods

MARY

We know it, lady.
A place that's set among impassable walls
As though world's trouble could not find it out.

CATHLEEN

It may be that we are that trouble, for we—
Although we've wandered in the wood this hour—
Have lost it too, yet I should know my way,
For I lived all my childhood in that house.

MARY

Then you are Countess Cathleen?

CATHLEEN

And this woman,
Oona, my nurse, should have remembered it,
For we were happy for a long time there.

OONA

The paths are overgrown with thickets now,
Or else some change has come upon my sight.

CATHLEEN

And this young man, that should have known the
woods—

Because we met him on their border but now,
Wandering and singing like a wave of the sea—
Is so wrapped up in dreams of terrors to come
That he can give no help.

MARY

You have still some way,
But I can put you on the trodden path
Your servants take when they are marketing.
But first sit down and rest yourself awhile,
For my old fathers served your fathers, lady,
Longer than books can tell—and it were strange
If you and yours should not be welcome here.

CATHLEEN

And it were stranger still were I ungrateful
For such kind welcome—but I must be gone,
For the night's gathering in.

SHEMUS

It is a long while
Since I've set eyes on bread or on what buys it.

CATHLEEN

So you are starving even in this wood,
Where I had thought I would find nothing changed

But that's a dream, for the old worm o' the world
Can eat its way into what place it pleases.

(*She gives money.*)

TEIG

Beautiful lady, give me something too;
I fell but now, being weak with hunger and thirst.
And lay upon the threshold like a log.

CATHLEEN

I gave for all and that was all I had.
Look, my purse is empty. I have passed
By starving men and women all this day,
And they have had the rest; but take the purse,
The silver clasps on't may be worth a trifle.
And if you'll come to-morrow to my house
You shall have twice the sum.

(ALEEL *begins to play.*)

SHEMUS (*muttering*)

What, music, music!

CATHLEEN

Ah, do not blame the finger on the string;
The doctors bid me fly the unlucky times

And find distraction for my thoughts, or else
Pine to my grave.

SHEMUS

I have said nothing, lady.
Why should the like of us complain?

OONA

Have done.
Sorrows that she's but read of in a book
Weigh on her mind as if they had been her own.

(OONA, MARY, *and* CATHLEEN *go out.* ALEEL *looks defiantly at* SHEMUS.)

ALEEL (*singing*)

Were I but crazy for love's sake
I know who'd measure out his length,
I know the heads that I should break,
For crazy men have double strength.
There! all's out now to leave or take,
And who mocks music mocks at love;
And when I'm crazy for love's sake
I'll not go far to choose.

(*Snapping his fingers in* SHEMUS' *face.*)

Enough!

I know the heads that I should break.

(*He takes a step towards the door and then turns again.*)

Shut to the door before the night has fallen,
For who can say what walks, or in what shape
Some devilish creature flies in the air, but now
Two grey-horned owls hooted above our heads.

(*He goes out, his singing dies away.* MARY *comes in.* SHEMUS *has been counting the money.*)

SHEMUS

So that fool's gone.

TEIG

He's seen the horned owls too.
There's no good luck in owls, but it may be
That the ill luck's to fall upon his head.

MARY

You never thanked her ladyship.

SHEMUS

Thank her,
For seven halfpence and a silver bit?

TEIG

But for this empty purse?

SHEMUS

What's that for thanks
Or what's the double of it that she promised?
With bread and flesh and every sort of food
Up to a price no man has heard the like of
And rising every day.

MARY

We have all she had;
She emptied out the purse before our eyes.

SHEMUS (*to* MARY, *who has gone to close the door*)
Leave that door open.

MARY

When those that have read books,
And seen the seven wonders of the world,
Fear what's above or what's below the ground,
It's time that poverty should bolt the door.

SHEMUS

I'll have no bolts, for there is not a thing
That walks above the ground or under it
I had not rather welcome to this house
Than any more of mankind, rich or poor.

TEIG

So that they brought us money.

SHEMUS

I heard say
There's something that appears like a white bird,
A pigeon or a seagull or the like,
But if you hit it with a stone or a stick
It clangs as though it had been made of brass,
And that if you dig down where it was scratching
You'll find a crock of gold.

TEIG

But dream of gold
For three nights running, and there's always gold.

SHEMUS

You might be starved before you've dug it out.

TEIG

But maybe if you called, something would come,
They have been seen of late.

MARY

Is it call devils?
Call devils from the wood, call them in here?

SHEMUS

So you'd stand up against me, and you'd say
Who or what I am to welcome here. (*He hits her.*)
That is to show who's master.

TEIG

Call them in.

MARY

God help us all!

SHEMUS

Pray, if you have a mind to.
It's little that the sleepy ears above
Care for your words; but I'll call what I please.

TEIG

There is many a one, they say, had money from them.

SHEMUS (*at door*)

Whatever you are that walk the woods at night,
So be it that you have not shouldered up
Out of a grave—for I'll have nothing human—
And have free hands, a friendly trick of speech,
I welcome you. Come, sit beside the fire.
What matter if your head's below your arms

Or you've a horse's tail to whip your flank,
Feathers instead of hair, that's all but nothing,
Come, share what bread and meat is in the house,
And stretch your heels and warm them in the ashes.
And after that, let's share and share alike
And curse all men and women. Come in, come in.
What, is there no one there? (*Turning from door.*)
And yet they say
They are as common as the grass, and ride
Even upon the book in the priest's hand.

(TEIG *lifts one arm slowly and points toward the door and begins moving backward.* SHEMUS *turns, he also sees something and begins moving backward.* MARY *does the same. A man dressed as an Eastern merchant comes in carrying a small carpet. He unrolls it and sits cross-legged at one end of it. Another man dressed in the same way follows, and sits at the other end. This is done slowly and deliberately. When they are seated they take money out of embroidered purses at their girdles and begin arranging it on the carpet.*)

TEIG

You speak to them.

SHEMUS

No, you.

TEIG

'Twas you that called them.

SHEMUS (*coming nearer*)

I'd make so bold, if you would pardon it,
To ask if there's a thing you'd have of us.
Although we are but poor people, if there is,
Why, if there is——

FIRST MERCHANT

We've travelled a long road,
For we are merchants that must tramp the world,
And now we look for supper and a fire
And a safe corner to count money in.

SHEMUS

I thought you were . . . but that's no matter now—
There had been words between my wife and me
Because I said I would be master here,
And ask in what I pleased or who I pleased
And so . . . but that is nothing to the point,
Because it's certain that you are but merchants.

FIRST MERCHANT

We travel for the Master of all merchants.

SHEMUS

Yet if you were that I had thought but now
I'd welcome you no less. Be what you please
And you'll have supper at the market rate,
That means that what was sold for but a penny
Is now worth fifty.

(MERCHANTS *begin putting money on carpet.*)

FIRST MERCHANT

Our Master bids us pay
So good a price, that all who deal with us
Shall eat, drink, and be merry.

SHEMUS (*to* MARY)

Bestir yourself,
Go kill and draw the fowl, while Teig and I
Lay out the plates and make a better fire.

MARY

I will not cook for you.

SHEMUS

Not cook! not cook!
Do not be angry. She wants to pay me back

Because I struck her in that argument.
But she'll get sense again. Since the dearth came
We rattle one on another as though we were
Knives thrown into a basket to be cleaned.

MARY

I will not cook for you, because I know
In what unlucky shape you sat but now
Outside this door.

TEIG

It's this, your honours:
Because of some wild words my father said
She thinks you are not of those who cast a shadow.

SHEMUS

I said I'd make the devils of the wood
Welcome, if they'd a mind to eat and drink;
But it is certain that you are men like us.

FIRST MERCHANT

It's strange that she should think we cast no shadow,
For there is nothing on the ridge of the world
That's more substantial than the merchants are
That buy and sell you.

MARY

If you are not demons,
And seeing what great wealth is spread out there,
Give food or money to the starving poor.

FIRST MERCHANT

If we knew how to find deserving poor
We'd do our share.

MARY

But seek them patiently.

FIRST MERCHANT

We know the evils of mere charity.

MARY

Those scruples may befit a common time.
I had thought there was a pushing to and fro,
At times like this, that overset the scale
And trampled measure down.

FIRST MERCHANT

But if already
We'd thought of a more prudent way than that?

SECOND MERCHANT

If each one brings a bit of merchandise,
We'll give him such a price he never dreamt of.

MARY

Where shall the starving come at merchandise?

FIRST MERCHANT

We will ask nothing but what all men have.

MARY

Their swine and cattle, fields and implements
Are sold and gone.

FIRST MERCHANT

They have not sold all yet
For there's a vapourous thing—that may be nothing,
But that's the buyer's risk—a second self,
They call immortal for a story's sake.

SHEMUS

They come to buy our souls?

TEIG

I'll barter mine.
Why should we starve for what may be but nothing?

MARY

Teig and Shemus-

SHEMUS

What can it be but nothing?
What has God poured out of His bag but famine?
Satan gives money.

TEIG

Yet no thunder stirs.

FIRST MERCHANT

There is a heap for each.

(SHEMUS *goes to take money.*)

But no, not yet,
For there's a work I have to set you to.

SHEMUS

So then you're as deceitful as the rest,
And all that talk of buying what's but a vapour
Is fancy bread. I might have known as much,
Because that's how the trick-o'-the-loop man talks.

FIRST MERCHANT

That's for the work, each has its separate price;
But neither price is paid till the work's done.

TEIG

The same for me.

MARY

Oh, God, why are you still?

FIRST MERCHANT

You've but to cry aloud at every cross-road,
At every house door, that we buy men's souls.
And give so good a price that all may live
In mirth and comfort till the famine's done,
Because we are Christian man.

SHEMUS

Come, let's away.

TEIG

I shall keep running till I've earned the price.

SECOND MERCHANT
(*who has risen and gone towards fire*)

Stop; you must have proof behind the words.
So here's your entertainment on the road.
(*He throws a bag of money on the ground.*)
Live as you please; our Master's generous.

(TEIG *and* SHEMUS *have stopped.* TEIG *takes the money. They go out.*)

MARY

Destroyers of souls, God will destroy you quickly.
You shall at last dry like dry leaves and hang
Nailed like dead vermin to the doors of God.

SECOND MERCHANT

Curse to your fill, for saints will have their dreams.

FIRST MERCHANT

Though we're but vermin that our Master sent
To overrun the world, he at the end
Shall pull apart the pale ribs of the moon
And quench the stars in the ancestral night.

MARY

God is all powerful.

SECOND MERCHANT

Pray, you shall need Him.
You shall eat dock and grass, and dandelion,
Till that low threshold there becomes a wall,
And when your hands can scarcely drag your body
We shall be near you.

(MARY *faints.*)

(*The* FIRST MERCHANT *takes up the carpet, spreads it before the fire and stands in front of it warming his hands.*)

FIRST MERCHANT

Our faces go unscratched.
Wring the neck o' that fowl; scatter the flour
And look if there is bread upon the shelves.
We'll turn the fowl upon the spit and roast it,
And eat the supper we were bidden to,
Now that the house is quiet, praise our Master,
And stretch and warm our heels among the ashes.

END OF SCENE I.

SCENE II

FRONT SCENE.—*A wood with perhaps distant views of turreted house at one side, but all in flat colour, without light and shade and against a diapered or gold background.*

COUNTESS CATHLEEN *comes in leaning upon* ALEEL'S *arm.* OONA *follows them.*

CATHLEEN (*stopping*)

Surely this leafy corner, where one smells
The wild bee's honey, has a story too?

OONA

There is the house at last.

ALEEL

A man, they say,
Loved Maeve the Queen of all the invisible host,
And died of his love nine centuries ago.
And now, when the moon's riding at the full,
She leaves her dancers lonely and lies there

Upon that level place, and for three days
Stretches and sighs and wets her long pale cheeks.

CATHLEEN

So she loves truly.

ALEEL

No, but wets her cheeks,
Lady, because she has forgot his name.

CATHLEEN

She'd sleep that trouble away—though it must be
A heavy trouble to forget his name—
If she had better sense.

OONA

Your own house, lady.

ALEEL

She sleeps high up on wintry Knock-na-rea
In an old cairn of stones; while her poor women
Must lie and jog in the wave if they would sleep—
Being water born—yet if she cry their names
They run up on the land and dance in the moon
Till they are giddy and would love as men do,
And be as patient and as pitiful.

But there is nothing that will ſtop in their heads
They've such poor memories, though they weep for it.
Oh, yes, they weep; that's when the moon is full.

CATHLEEN

Is it because they have short memories
They live so long?

ALEEL

What's memory but the ash
That chokes our fires that have begun to sink?
And they've a dizzy, everlaſting fire.

OONA

There is your own house, lady.

CATHLEEN

Why, that's true,
And we'd have passed it without noticing.

ALEEL

A curse upon it for a meddlesome house!
Had it but ſtayed away I would have known
What Queen Maeve thinks on when the moon is pinched;

And whether now—as in the old days—the dancers
Set their brief love on men.

OONA

Rest on my arm.
These are no thoughts for any Christian ear.

ALEEL

I am younger, she would be too heavy for you.

(*He begins taking his lute out of the bag*; CATHLEEN, *who has turned towards* OONA, *turns back to him.*)

This hollow box remembers every foot
That danced upon the level grass of the world,
And will tell secrets if I whisper to it.

(*Sings.*)

Lift up the white knee;
Hear what they sing,
Those young dancers
That in a ring
Raved but now
Of the hearts that broke
Long, long ago
For their sake.

OONA

New friends are sweet.

ALEEL

" But the dance changes.
Lift up the gown,
All that sorrow
Is trodden down."

OONA

The empty rattle-pate! Lean on this arm,
That I can tell you is a christened arm,
And not like some, if we are to judge by speech.
But as you please. It is time I was forgot.
Maybe it is not on this arm you slumbered
When you were as helpless as a worm.

ALEEL

Stay with me till we come to your own house.

CATHLEEN (*sitting down*)

When I am rested I will need no help.

ALEEL

I thought to have kept her from remembering

The evil of the times for full ten minutes;
But now when seven are out you come between.

OONA

Talk on; what does it matter what you say,
For you have not been christened?

ALEEL

Old woman, old woman,
You robbed her of three minutes peace of mind,
And though you live unto a hundred years,
And wash the feet of beggars and give alms,
And climb Croaghpatrick, you shall not be pardoned.

OONA

How does a man who never was baptized
Know what Heaven pardons?

ALEEL

You are a sinful woman.

OONA

I care no more than if a pig had grunted.

(*Enter* CATHLEEN'S *Steward*.)

STEWARD

I am not to blame, for I had locked the gate,
The forester's to blame. The men climbed in
At the east corner where the elm-tree is.

CATHLEEN

I do not understand you, who has climbed?

STEWARD

Then God be thanked, I am the first to tell you.
I was afraid some other of the servants—
Though I've been on the watch—had been the first,
And mixed up truth and lies, your ladyship.

CATHLEEN (*rising*)

Has some misfortune happened?

STEWARD

Yes, indeed
The forester that let the branches lie
Against the wall's to blame for everything,
For that is how the rogues got into the garden.

CATHLEEN

I thought to have escaped misfortune here.
Has any one been killed?

STEWARD

Oh, no, not killed.
They have ſtolen half a cart-load of green cabbage

CATHLEEN

But maybe they were ſtarving.

STEWARD

That is certain.
To rob or ſtarve, that was the choice they had.

CATHLEEN

A learned theologian has laid down
That ſtarving men may take what's necessary,
And yet be sinless.

OONA

Sinless and a thief!
There should be broken bottles on the wall.

CATHLEEN

And if it be a sin, while faith's unbroken
God cannot help but pardon. There is no soul
But it's unlike all others in the world,
Nor one but lifts a ſtrangeness to God's love

Till that's grown infinite, and therefore none
Whose loss were less than irremediable
Although it were the wickedest in the world.

(*Enter* Teig *and* Shemus.)

Steward

What are you running for? Pull off your cap,
Do you not see who's there?

Shemus

I cannot wait.
I am running to the world with the best news
That has been brought it for a thousand years.

Steward

Then get your breath and speak.

Shemus

If you'd my news
You'd run as fast and be as out of breath.

Teig

Such news, we shall be carried on men's shoulders.

Shemus

There's something every man has carried with him

And thought no more about than if it were
A mouthful of the wind; and now it's grown
A marketable thing!

TEIG

And yet it seemed
As useless as the paring of one's nails.

SHEMUS

What sets me laughing when I think of it,
Is that a rogue who's lain in lousy straw,
If he but sell it, may set up his coach.

TEIG (*laughing*)

There are two gentlemen who buy men's souls.

CATHLEEN

O God!

TEIG

And maybe there's no soul at all.

STEWARD

They're drunk or mad.

TEIG

Look at the price they give.
(*Showing money.*)

SHEMUS (*tossing up money*)

" Go cry it all about the world," they said.
" Money for souls, good money for a soul "

CATHLEEN

Give twice and thrice and twenty times their money.
And get your souls again. I will pay all.

SHEMUS

Not we! not we! For souls—if there are souls—
But keep the flesh out of its merriment.
I shall be drunk and merry.

TEIG

Come, let's away.
(*He goes.*)

CATHLEEN

But there's a world to come.

SHEMUS

And if there is,
I'd rather trust myself into the hands

That can pay money down than to the hands
That have but shaken famine from the bag.

(*He goes out* R.)

(*Lilting*)

"There's money for a soul, sweet yellow money.
There's money for men's souls, good money, money."

CATHLEEN (*to* ALEEL)

Go call them here again, bring them by force,
Beseech them, bribe, do anything you like;

(ALEEL *goes.*)

And you too follow, add your prayers to his.

(OONA, *who has been praying, goes out.*)

Steward, you know the secrets of my house.
How much have I?

STEWARD

A hundred kegs of gold.

CATHLEEN

How much have I in castles?

STEWARD

As much more.

CATHLEEN

How much have I in pasture?

STEWARD

As much more.

CATHLEEN

How much have I in forests?

STEWARD

As much more.

CATHLEEN

Keeping this house alone, sell all I have,
Go barter where you please, but come again
With herds of cattle and with ships of meal.

STEWARD

God's blessing light upon your ladyship.
You will have saved the land.

CATHLEEN

Make no delay.

(*He goes* L.)

(ALEEL *and* OONA *return*)

CATHLEEN

They have not come; speak quickly.

ALEEL

One drew his knife
And said that he would kill the man or woman
That stopped his way; and when I would have stopped him
He made this stroke at me; but it is nothing.

CATHLEEN

You shall be tended. From this day for ever
I'll have no joy or sorrow of my own.

OONA

Their eyes shone like the eyes of birds of prey.

CATHLEEN

Come, follow me, for the earth burns my feet
Till I have changed my house to such a refuge
That the old and ailing, and all weak of heart,
May escape from beak and claw; all, all, shall come
Till the walls burst and the roof fall on us.
From this day out I have nothing of my own.

(*She goes.*)

OONA (*taking* ALEEL *by the arm as she speaks, bandaging his wound*)

She has found something now to put her hand to,
And you and I are of no more account
Than flies upon a window-pane in the winter.

(*They go out.*)

END OF SCENE II.

SCENE III

SCENE.—*Hall in the house of* COUNTESS CATHLEEN. *At the Left an oratory with steps leading up to it. At the Right a tapestried wall, more or less repeating the form of the oratory, and a great chair with its back against the wall. In the Centre are two or more arches through which one can see dimly the trees in the garden.* CATHLEEN *is kneeling in front of the altar in the oratory; there is a hanging lighted lamp over the altar.* ALEEL *enters.*

ALEEL

I have come to bid you leave this castle and fly
Out of these woods.

CATHLEEN

What evil is there here
That is not everywhere from this to the sea?

ALEEL

They who have sent me walk invisible.

CATHLEEN

So it is true what I have heard men say,
That you have seen and heard what others cannot.

ALEEL

I was asleep in my bed, and while I slept
My dreams became a fire; and in the fire
One walked and he had birds' about his head.

CATHLEEN

I have heard that one of the old gods walked so.

ALEEL

It may be that he is angelical;
And, lady, he bids me call you from these woods.
And you must bring but your old foster-mother,
And some few serving men, and live in the hills,
Among the sounds of music and the light
Of waters, till the evil days are done.
For here some terrible death is waiting you,
Some unimagined evil, some great darkness
That fable has not dreamt of, nor sun nor moon
Scattered.

CATHLEEN

No, not angelical.

ALEEL

This house
You are to leave with some old trusty man,

And bid him shelter all that ſtarve or wander
While there is food and house room.

CATHLEEN

He bids me go
Where none of mortal creatures but the swan
Dabbles, and there you would pluck the harp, when the trees
Had made a heavy shadow about our door,
And talk among the ruſtling of the reeds,
When night hunted the foolish sun away
With ſtillness and pale tapers. No—no—no!
I cannot. Although I weep, I do not weep
Because that life would be moſt happy, and here
I find no way, no end. Nor do I weep
Because I had longed to look upon your face,
But that a night of prayer has made me weary.

ALEEL (*proſtrating himself before her*)
Let Him that made mankind, the angels and devils
And dearth and plenty, mend what He has made,
For when we labour in vain and eye ſtill sees
Heart breaks in vain.

CATHLEEN

How would that quiet end?

ALEEL

How but in healing?

CATHLEEN

You have seen my tears
And I can see your hand shake on the floor.

ALEEL (*faltering*)

I thought but of healing. He was angelical.

CATHLEEN (*turning away from him*)

No, not angelical, but of the old gods,
Who wander about the world to awaken the heart—
The passionate, proud heart—that all the angels,
Leaving nine heavens empty, would rock to sleep.

(*She goes to chapel door;* ALEEL *holds his clasped hands towards her for a moment hesitatingly, and then lets them fall beside him.*)

CATHLEEN

Do not hold out to me beseeching hands.
This heart shall never waken on earth. I have sworn,
By her whose heart the seven sorrows have pierced,
To pray before this altar until my heart

Has grown to Heaven like a tree, and there
Rustled its leaves, till Heaven has saved my people.

ALEEL (*who has risen*)

When one so great has spoken of love to one
So little as I, though to deny him love,
What can he but hold out beseeching hands,
Then let them fall beside him, knowing how greatly
They have overdared?

(*He goes towards the door of the hall. The* COUNTESS CATHLEEN *takes a few steps towards him.*)

CATHLEEN

If the old tales are true,
Queens have wed shepherds and kings beggar-maids;
God's procreant waters flowing about your mind
Have made you more than kings and queens; and not you
But I am the empty pitcher.

ALEEL

Being silent
I have said all, yet let me stay beside you.

CATHLEEN

No, no, not while my heart is shaken. No,
But you shall hear wind cry and water cry,
And curlew cry, and have the peace I longed for.

ALEEL

Give me your hand to kiss.

CATHLEEN

I kiss your forehead.
And yet I send you from me. Do not speak;
There have been women that bid men to rob
Crowns from the Country-under-Wave or apples
Upon a dragon-guarded hill, and all
That they might sift men's hearts and wills,
And trembled as they bid it, as I tremble
That lay a hard task on you, that you go,
And silently, and do not turn your head;
Goodbye; but do not turn your head and look;
Above all else, I would not have you look.

(ALEEL *goes.*)

I never spoke to him of his wounded hand,
And now he is gone. (*She looks out.*)
I cannot see him, for all is dark outside.

Would my imagination and my heart
Were as little shaken as this holy flame!

(*She goes slowly into the chapel. The distant sound of an alarm bell. The two* MERCHANTS *enter hurriedly.*)

SECOND MERCHANT

They are ringing the alarm, and in a moment
They'll be upon us.

FIRST MERCHANT (*going to a door at the side*)

Here is the Treasury,
You'd my commands to put them all to sleep.

SECOND MERCHANT

Some angel or else her prayers protected them.

(*Goes into the Treasury and returns with bags of treasure.* FIRST MERCHANT *has been listening at the oratory door.*)

FIRST MERCHANT

She has fallen asleep.

(SECOND MERCHANT *goes out through one of the arches at the back and stands listening. The bags are at his feet.*)

SECOND MERCHANT

We've all the treasure now,
So let's away before they've tracked us out.

FIRST MERCHANT

I have a plan to win her.

SECOND MERCHANT

You have time enough
If you would kill her and bear off her soul
Before they are upon us with their prayers;
They search the Western Tower.

FIRST MERCHANT

That may not be.
We cannot face the heavenly host in arms.
Her soul must come to us of its own will,
But being of the ninth and mightiest Hell
Where all are kings, I have a plan to win it.
Lady, we've news that's crying out for speech.

(CATHLEEN *wakes and comes to door of chapel.*)

CATHLEEN

Who calls?

FIRST MERCHANT

Lady, we have brought news.

CATHLEEN

What are you?

FIRST MERCHANT

We are merchants, and we know the book of the world
Because we have walked upon its leaves; and there
Have read of late matters that much concern you;
And noticing the castle door stand open,
Came in to find an ear.

CATHLEEN

The door stands open,
That no one who is famished or afraid,
Despair of help or of a welcome with it.
But you have news, you say.

FIRST MERCHANT

We saw a man,
Heavy with sickness in the bog of Allen,
Whom you had bid buy cattle. Near Fair Head
We saw your grain ships lying all becalmed
In the dark night; and not less still than they,
Burned all their mirrored lanthorns in the sea.

CATHLEEN

Thanks be to God there's money in the house
That can buy grain from those who have stored it up
To prosper on the hunger of the poor.
But you've been far and know the signs of things,
When will this famine end?

FIRST MERCHANT

Day copies day,
And there's no sign of change, nor can it change
With the wheat withered and the cattle dead.

CATHLEEN

And heard you of the demons who buy souls?

FIRST MERCHANT

There are some men who hold they have wolves' heads,
And say their limbs—dried by the infinite flame—
Have all the speed of storms; others, again,
Say they are gross and little; while a few
Will have it they seem much as mortals are,
But tall and brown and travelled—like us, lady—

Yet all agree a power is in their looks
That makes men bow, and flings a casting-net
About their souls, and that all men would go
And barter those poor vapours, were it not
You bribe them with the safety of your gold.

CATHLEEN

Praise God, that I am wealthy! Why do they sell?

FIRST MERCHANT

As we came in at the great doors we saw
Your porter sleeping in his niche—a soul
Too little to be worth a hundred pence,
And yet they'd buy it for a hundred crowns,
But for a soul like yours, I heard them say,
They would give five hundred thousand crowns and more.

CATHLEEN

How can a heap of crowns pay for a soul?
Is the green grave so terrible a thing?

FIRST MERCHANT

Some sell because the money gleams, and some
Because they are in terror of the grave,

And some because their neighbours sold before,
And some because there is a kind of joy
In casting hope away, in losing joy,
In ceasing all resistance, in at last
Opening one's arms to the eternal flames,
In casting all sails out upon the wind;
To this—full of the gaiety of the lost—
Would all folk hurry if your gold were gone.

CATHLEEN

There is a something, Merchant, in your voice
That makes me fear. When you were telling how
A man may lose his soul and lose his God
Your eyes were lighted up, and when you told
How my poor money serves the people, both—
Merchants forgive me—seemed to smile.

FIRST MERCHANT

I laugh
To think that all these people should be swung
As on a lady's shoe-string,—under them
The glowing leagues of never-ending flame.

CATHLEEN

There is a something in you that I fear;

A something not of us; were you not born
In some most distant corner of the world?

(*The* SECOND MERCHANT, *who has been listening at the door, comes forward, and as he comes a sound of voices and feet is heard.*)

SECOND MERCHANT

Away now—they are in the passage—hurry,
For they will know us, and freeze up our hearts
With Ave Marys, and burn all our skin
With holy water.

FIRST MERCHANT

Farewell; for we must ride
Many a mile before the morning come;
Our horses beat the ground impatiently.

(*They go out. A number of* PEASANTS *enter by other door.*)

FIRST PEASANT

Forgive us, lady, but we heard a noise.

SECOND PEASANT

We sat by the fireside telling vanities.

FIRST PEASANT

We heard a noise, but though we have searched the house
We have found nobody.

CATHLEEN

You are too timid,
For now you are safe from all the evil times,
There is no evil that can find you here.

OONA (*entering hurriedly*)

Ochone! Ochone! The treasure room is broken in.
The door stands open, and the gold is gone.
(PEASANTS *raise a cry*.)

CATHLEEN

Be silent. (*The cry ceases*.) Have you seen nobody?

OONA

Ochone!
That my good mistress should lose all this money.

CATHLEEN

Let those among you—not too old to ride—

Get horses and search all the country round,
I'll give a farm to him who finds the thieves.

(*A man with keys at his girdle has come in while she speaks. There is a general murmur of "The porter! the porter!"*)

PORTER

Demons were here. I sat beside the door
In my stone niche, and two owls passed me by,
Whispering with human voices.

OLD MERCHANT

God forsakes us.

CATHLEEN

Old man, old man, He never closed a door
Unless one opened. I am desolate,
Because of a strange thought that's in my heart;
But I have still my faith; therefore be silent;
For surely He does not forsake the world,
But stands before it modelling in the clay
And moulding there His image. Age by age
The clay wars with His fingers and pleads hard
For its old, heavy, dull and shapeless ease;

But sometimes—though His hand is on it ſtill—
It moves awry and demon hordes are born.

(PEASANTS *cross themselves.*)

Yet leave me now, for I am desolate,
I hear a whisper from beyond the thunder.

(*She comes from the oratory door.*)

Yet ſtay an inſtant. When we meet again
I may have grown forgetful. Oona, take
These two—the larder and the dairy keys.

(*To the* PORTER.)

But take you this. It opens the small room
Of herbs for medicine, of hellebore,
Of vervain, monkshood, plantain, and self-heal.
The book of cures is on the upper shelf.

PORTER

Why do you do this, lady; did you see
Your coffin in a dream?

CATHLEEN

Ah, no, not that.
But I have come to a ſtrange thought. I have heard
A sound of wailing in unnumbered hovels,

And I must go down, down—I know not where—
Pray for all men and women mad from famine;
Pray, you good neighbours.

(*The* PEASANTS *all kneel.* COUNTESS CATHLEEN *ascends the steps to the door of the oratory, and turning round stands there motionless for a little, and then cries in a loud voice :*)

Mary, Queen of angels
And all you clouds on clouds of saints, farewell!

END OF SCENE III.

SCENE IV

SCENE.—*A wood near the Castle, as in Scene II. A group of* PEASANTS *pass.*

FIRST PEASANT

I have seen silver and copper, but not gold.

SECOND PEASANT

It's yellow and it shines.

FIRST PEASANT

It's beautiful.
The most beautiful thing under the sun,
That's what I've heard.

THIRD PEASANT

I have seen gold enough.

FOURTH PEASANT

I would not say that it's so beautiful.

FIRST PEASANT

But doesn't a gold piece glitter like the sun?
That's what my father, who'd seen better days,
Told me when I was but a little boy—
So high—so high, it's shining like the sun,
Round and shining, that is what he said.

SECOND PEASANT

There's nothing in the world it cannot buy.

FIRST PEASANT

They've bags and bags of it.

(They go out. The two MERCHANTS *follow silently. Then* ALEEL *passes over the stage singing.)*

ALEEL

Impetuous heart be still, be still
Your sorrowful love can never be told,
Cover it up with a lonely tune.
He who could bend all things to His will
Has covered the door of the infinite fold
With the pale stars and the wandering moon.

END OF SCENE IV.

SCENE V

Scene.—*The house of* Shemus Rua. *There is an alcove at the back with curtains; in it a bed, and on the bed is the body of* Mary *with candles round it. The two* Merchants *while they speak put a large book upon a table, arrange money, and so on.*

First Merchant

Thanks to that lie I told about the ships
And that about the herdsman lying sick,
We shall be too much thronged with souls to-morrow

Second Merchant

What has she in her coffers now but mice?

First Merchant

When the night fell and I had shaped myself
Into the image of the man-headed owl,
I hurried to the cliffs of Donegal,
And saw with all their canvas full of wind
And rushing through the parti-coloured sea

Those ships that bring the women grain and meal.
They're but three days from us.

SECOND MERCHANT

When the dew rose
I hurried in like feathers to the east,
And saw nine hundred oxen driven through Meath
With goads of iron. They're but three days from us

FIRST MERCHANT

Three days for traffic.

(PEASANTS *crowd in with* TEIG *and* SHEMUS.)

SHEMUS

Come in, come in, you are welcome.
That is my wife. She mocked at my great masters,
And would not deal with them. Now there she is;
She does not even know she was a fool,
So great a fool she was.

TEIG

She would not eat
One crumb of bread bought with our master's money,
But lived on nettles, dock, and dandelion.

SHEMUS

There's nobody could put into her head
That Death is the worst thing can happen us,
Though that sounds simple, for her tongue grew rank
With all the lies that she had heard in chapel.
Draw to the curtain. (TEIG *draws it.*) You'll not play the fool
While these good gentlemen are there to save you.

SECOND MERCHANT

Since the drought came they drift about in a throng,
Like autumn leaves blown by the dreary winds.
Come, deal—come, deal.

FIRST MERCHANT

Who will come deal with us?

SHEMUS

They are out of spirit, sir, with lack of food,
Save four or five. Here, sir, is one of these;
The others will gain courage in good time.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

I come to deal—if you give honest price.

First Merchant (*reading in a book*)

"John Maher, a man of substance, with dull mind,
And quiet senses and unventurous heart.
The angels think him safe." Two hundred crowns,
All for a soul, a little breath of wind.

The Man

I ask three hundred crowns. You have read there
That no mere lapse of days can make me yours.

First Merchant

There is something more writ here—"Often at night
He is wakeful from a dread of growing poor,
And thereon wonders if there's any man
That he could rob in safety."

A Peasant

Who'd have thought it?
And I was once alone with him at midnight.

Another Peasant

I will not trust my mother after this.

First Merchant

There is this crack in you—two hundred crowns.

A PEASANT

That's plenty for a rogue.

ANOTHER PEASANT

I'd give him nothing.

SHEMUS

You'll get no more—so take what's offered you.

(*A general murmur, during which the* MIDDLE-AGED MAN *takes money, and slips into background, where he sinks on to a seat.*)

FIRST MERCHANT

Has no one got a better soul than that?
If only for the credit of your parishes,
Traffic with us.

A WOMAN

What will you give for mine?

FIRST MERCHANT (*reading in book*)

" Soft, handsome, and still young "—not much, I think.
" It's certain that the man she's married to
Knows nothing of what's hidden in the jar
Between the hour-glass and the pepper-pot."

THE WOMAN

The scandalous book.

FIRST MERCHANT

"Nor how when he's away
At the horse fair the hand that wrote what's hid
Will tap three times upon the window-pane."

THE WOMAN

And if there is a letter, that is no reason
Why I should have less money than the others.

FIRST MERCHANT

You're almost safe, I give you fifty crowns.

(*She turns to go.*)

A hundred, then.

SHEMUS

Woman, have sense—come, come.
Is this a time to haggle at the price?
There, take it up. There, there. That's right.

(*She takes them and goes into the crowd.*)

FIRST MERCHANT

Come, deal, deal, deal. It is but for charity

We buy such souls at all; a thousand sins
Made them our Master's long before we came.

(Aleel *enters.*)

Aleel

Here, take my soul, for I am tired of it.
I do not ask a price.

Shemus

Not ask a price?
How can you sell your soul without a price?
I would not listen to his broken wits;
His love for Countess Cathleen has so crazed him
He hardly understands what he is saying.

Aleel

The trouble that has come on Countess Cathleen,
The sorrow that is in her wasted face,
The burden in her eyes, have broke my wits,
And yet I know I'd have you take my soul.

First Merchant

We cannot take your soul, for it is hers.

Aleel

No, but you must. Seeing it cannot help her
I have grown tired of it.

FIRST MERCHANT

Begone from me,
I may not touch it.

ALEEL

Is your power so small?
And must I bear it with me all my days?
May you be scorned and mocked!

FIRST MERCHANT

Drag him away.
He troubles me.

(TEIG *and* SHEMUS *lead* ALEEL *into the crowd.*)

SECOND MERCHANT

His gaze has filled me, brother,
With shaking and a dreadful fear.

FIRST MERCHANT

Lean forward
And kiss the circlet where my Master's lips
Were pressed upon it when he sent us hither;
You shall have peace once more.

(SECOND MERCHANT *kisses the gold circlet that is about the head of the* FIRST MERCHANT.)

I, too, grow weary,
But there is something moving in my heart
Whereby I know that what we seek the most
Is drawing near—our labour will soon end.
Come, deal, deal, deal, deal, deal; are you all dumb?
What, will you keep me from our ancient home,
And from the eternal revelry?

SECOND MERCHANT

Deal, deal.

SHEMUS

They say you beat the woman down too low.

FIRST MERCHANT

I offer this great price: a thousand crowns
For an old woman who was always ugly.

(*An old* PEASANT WOMAN *comes forward, and he takes up a book and reads*:)

There is but little set down here against her.
"She has stolen eggs and fowl when times were bad,
But when the times grew better has confessed it;
She never missed her chapel of a Sunday
And when she could, paid dues." Take up your money.

OLD WOMAN

God bless you, sir. (*She screams.*) Oh, sir, a pain went through me!

FIRST MERCHANT

That name is like a fire to all damned souls.

(*Murmur among the* PEASANTS, *who shrink back from her as she goes out screaming.*)

A PEASANT

How she screamed out!

SECOND PEASANT

And maybe we shall scream so.

THIRD PEASANT

I tell you there is no such place as hell.

FIRST MERCHANT

Can such a trifle turn you from your profit?
Come, deal; come, deal.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

Master, I am afraid.

FIRST MERCHANT

I bought your soul, an' there's no sense in fear
Now the soul's gone.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

Give me my soul again.

WOMAN (*going on her knees and clinging to* MERCHANT)

And take this money too, and give me mine.

SECOND MERCHANT

Bear bastards, drink or follow some wild fancy;
For sighs and cries are the soul's work,
And you have none.

(*Throws the woman off.*)

PEASANT

Come, let's away.

ANOTHER PEASANT

Yes, yes.

ANOTHER PEASANT

Come quickly; if that woman had not screamed
I would have lost my soul.

ANOTHER PEASANT

Come, come away.

(*They turn to door, but are ſtopped by shouts of " Countess Cathleen! Countess Cathleen!"*)

CATHLEEN (*entering*)

And so you trade once more?

FIRST MERCHANT

In spite of you.
What brings you here, saint with the sapphire eyes?

CATHLEEN

I come to barter a soul for a great price.

SECOND MERCHANT

What matter, if the soul be worth the price?

CATHLEEN

The people ſtarve, therefore the people go
Thronging to you. I hear a cry come from them
And it is in my ears by night and day,
And I would have five hundred thousand crowns
That I may feed them till the dearth go by.

FIRST MERCHANT

It may be the soul's worth it.

CATHLEEN

There is more:
The souls that you have bought must be set free.

FIRST MERCHANT

We know of but one soul that's worth the price.

CATHLEEN

Being my own it seems a priceless thing.

SECOND MERCHANT

You offer us——

CATHLEEN

I offer my own soul.

A PEASANT

Do not, do not, for souls the like of ours
Are not precious to God as your soul is.
O! what would heaven do without you, lady?

ANOTHER PEASANT

Look how their claws clutch in their leathern gloves.

FIRST MERCHANT

Five hundred thousand crowns; we give the price.
The gold is here; the souls even while you speak
Have slipped out of our bond, because your face
Has shed a light on them and filled their hearts
But you must sign, for we omit no form
In buying a soul like yours.

SECOND MERCHANT

Sign with this quill.
It was a feather growing on the cock
That crowed when Peter dared deny his Master,
And all who use it have great honour in Hell.

(CATHLEEN *leans forward to sign.*)

ALEEL (*rushing forward and snatching the pen from her*)

Leave all things to the builder of the heavens.

CATHLEEN

I have no thoughts; I hear a cry—a cry.

ALEEL (*casting the pen on the ground*)

I have seen a vision under a green hedge,
A hedge of hips and haws—men yet shall hear

The Archangels rolling Satan's empty skull
Over the mountain-tops.

FIRST MERCHANT

Take him away.

(TEIG *and* SHEMUS *drag him roughly away so that he falls upon the floor among the* PEASANTS. CATHLEEN *picks up parchment and signs, then turns towards the* PEASANTS.)

CATHLEEN

Take up the money, and now come with me;
When we are far from this polluted place
I will give everybody money enough.

(*She goes out, the* PEASANTS *crowding round her and kissing her dress.* ALEEL *and the two* MERCHANTS *are left alone.*)

SECOND MERCHANT

We must away and wait until she dies,
Sitting above her tower as two grey owls,
Waiting as many years as may be, guarding
Our precious jewel; waiting to seize her soul.

FIRST MERCHANT

We need but hover over her head in the air,

For she has only minutes. When she signed
Her heart began to break. Hush, hush, I hear
The brazen door of Hell move on its hinges,
And the eternal revelry float hither
To hearten us.

SECOND MERCHANT

Leap feathered on the air
And meet them with her soul caught in your claws.

(They rush out. ALEEL *crawls into the middle of the room. The twilight has fallen and gradually darkens as the scene goes on. There is a distant muttering of thunder and a sound of rising storm.)*

ALEEL

The brazen door stands wide, and Balor comes
Borne in his heavy car, and demons have lifted
The age-weary eyelids from the eyes that of old
Turned gods to stone; Barach, the traitor, comes
And the lascivious race, Cailitin,
That cast a druid weakness and decay
Over Sualtem's and old Dectera's child;
And that great king Hell first took hold upon
When he killed Naisi and broke Deirdre's heart

And all their heads are twisted to one side,
For when they lived they warred on beauty and peace
With obstinate, crafty, sidelong bitterness.
Crouch down, old heron, out of the blind storm.

OONA

Where is the Countess Cathleen? All this day
Her eyes were full of tears, and when for a moment
Her hand was laid upon my hand it trembled,
And now I do not know where she is gone.

ALEEL

Cathleen has chosen other friends than us,
And they are rising through the hollow world.
Demons are out, old heron.

OONA

God guard her soul.

ALEEL

She's bartered it away this very hour,
As though we two were never in the world.
(He points downward.)

First, Orchill, her pale, beautiful head alive,
Her body shadowy as vapour drifting
Under the dawn, for she who awoke desire
Has but a heart of blood when others die;
About her is a vapoury multitude
Of women alluring devils with soft laughter;
Behind her a host heat of the blood made sin,
But all the little pink-white nails have grown
To be great talons.

(*He seizes* OONA *and drags her into the middle of the room and points downward with vehement gestures. The wind roars.*)

They begin a song
And there is still some music on their tongues.

OONA (*casting herself face downwards on the floor*)

O, Maker of all, protect her from the demons,
And if a soul must need be lost, take mine.

(ALEEL *kneels beside her, but does not seem to hear her words. The* PEASANTS *return. They carry the* COUNTESS CATHLEEN *and lay her upon the ground before* OONA *and* ALEEL. *She lies there as if dead.*)

OONA

O, that so many pitchers of rough clay
Should prosper and the porcelain break in two!

(*She kisses the hands of* CATHLEEN.)

A PEASANT

We were under the tree where the path turns,
When she grew pale as death and fainted away.
And while we bore her hither cloudy gusts
Blackened the world and shook us on our feet;
Draw the great bolt, for no man has beheld
So black, bitter, blinding, and sudden a storm.

(*One who is near the door draws the bolt.*)

CATHLEEN

O, hold me, and hold me tightly, for the storm
Is dragging me away.

(OONA *takes her in her arms. A* WOMAN *begins to wail.*)

PEASANT

Hush!

PEASANTS

Hush!

PEASANT WOMEN

Hush!

OTHER PEASANT WOMEN

Hush!

CATHLEEN (*half rising*)

Lay all the bags of money in a heap,
And when I am gone, old Oona, share them out
To every man and woman: judge, and give
According to their needs.

A PEASANT WOMAN

And she will give
Enough to keep my children through the dearth?

ANOTHER PEASANT WOMAN

O, Queen of Heaven, and all you blessed saints.
Let us and ours be lost so she be shriven.

CATHLEEN

Bend down your faces, Oona and Aleel;
I gaze upon them as the swallow gazes
Upon the nest under the eave, before
She wander the loud waters. Do not weep

Too great a while, for there is many a candle
On the High Altar though one fall. Aleel,
Who sang about the dancers of the woods,
That know not the hard burden of the world,
Having but breath in their kind bodies, farewell!
And farewell, Oona, you who played with me,
And bore me in your arms about the house
When I was but a child and therefore happy,
Therefore happy, even like those that dance.
The storm is in my hair and I must go.

(*She dies.*)

OONA

Bring me the looking-glass.

(A WOMAN *brings it to her out of the inner room.* OONA *holds it over the lips of* CATHLEEN. *All is silent for a moment. And then she speaks in a half scream :*)

O, she is dead!

A PEASANT

She was the great white lily of the world.

A PEASANT

She was more beautiful than the pale stars.

AN OLD PEASANT WOMAN

The little plant I love is broken in two.

(ALEEL *takes looking-glass from* OONA *and flings it upon the floor so that it is broken in many pieces.*)

ALEEL

I shatter you in fragments, for the face
That brimmed you up with beauty is no more:
And die, dull heart, for she whose mournful words
Made you a living spirit has passed away
And left you but a ball of passionate dust.
And you, proud earth and plumy sea, fade out!
For you may hear no more her faltering feet,
But are left lonely amid the clamorous war
Of angels upon devils.

(*He stands up; almost every one is kneeling, but it has grown so dark that only confused forms can be seen.*)

And I who weep
Call curses on you, Time and Fate and Change,
And have no excellent hope but the great hour

When you shall plunge headlong through bottomless
space.

(*A flash of lightning followed immediately by thunder.*)

A PEASANT WOMAN

Pull him upon his knees before his curses
Have plucked thunder and lightning on our heads.

ALEEL

Angels and devils clash in the middle air,
And brazen swords clang upon brazen helms.

(*A flash of lightning followed immediately by thunder.*)

Yonder a bright spear, cast out of a sling,
Has torn through Balor's eye, and the dark clans
Fly screaming as they fled Moytura of old.

(*Everything is lost in darkness.*)

AN OLD MAN

The Almighty wrath at our great weakness and sin
Has blotted out the world and we must die.

(*The darkness is broken by a visionary light. The* PEASANTS *seem to be kneeling upon the rocky*

slope of a mountain, and vapour full of storm and ever-changing light is sweeping above them and behind them. Half in the light, half in the shadow, stand armed angels. Their armour is old and worn, and their drawn swords dim and dinted. They stand as if upon the air in formation of battle and look downward with stern faces. The PEASANTS *cast themselves on the ground.*)

ALEEL

Look no more on the half-closed gates of Hell,
But speak to me, whose mind is smitten of God,
That it may be no more with mortal things,
And tell of her who lies there.

(*He seizes one of the angels.*)

Till you speak
You shall not drift into eternity.

THE ANGEL

The light beats down; the gates of pearl are wide
And she is passing to the floor of peace,
And Mary of the seven times wounded heart
Has kissed her lips, and the long blessed hair
Has fallen on her face; The Light of Lights

Looks always on the motive, not the deed,
The Shadow of Shadows on the deed alone.

(ALEEL *releases the* ANGEL *and kneels*.)

OONA

Tell them who walk upon the floor of peace
That I would die and go to her I love;
The years like great black oxen tread the world,
And God the herdsman goads them on behind
And I am broken by their passing feet.

(*A sound of far-off horns seems to come from the heart of the Light. The vision melts away, and the forms of the kneeling* PEASANTS *appear faintly in the darkness*.)

THE ROSE

" *Sero te amavi, Pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova! Sero te amavi.*"—S. AUGUSTINE.

To

LIONEL JOHNSON

TO THE ROSE UPON THE ROOD OF TIME

Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days!
Come near me, while I sing the ancient ways:
Cuchulain battling with the bitter tide;
The Druid, grey, wood-nurtured, quiet-eyed,
Who cast round Fergus dreams, and ruin untold;
And thine own sadness, whereof stars, grown old
In dancing silver sandalled on the sea,
Sing in their high and lonely melody.
Come near, that no more blinded by man's fate,
I find under the boughs of love and hate,
In all poor foolish things that live a day,
Eternal beauty wandering on her way.

Come near, come near, come near—Ah, leave me still
A little space for the rose-breath to fill!
Lest I no more hear common things that crave;
The weak worm hiding down in its small cave,

The field mouse running by me in the grass,
And heavy mortal hopes that toil and pass;
But seek alone to hear the strange things said
By God to the bright hearts of those long dead,
And learn to chaunt a tongue men do not know.
Come near; I would, before my time to go,
Sing of old Eire and the ancient ways:
Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days.

FERGUS AND THE DRUID

FERGUS

THE whole day have I followed in the rocks,
And you have changed and flowed from shape to shape,
First as a raven on whose ancient wings
Scarcely a feather lingered, then you seemed
A weasel moving on from stone to stone,
And now at last you wear a human shape,
A thin grey man half lost in gathering night.

DRUID

What would you, king of the proud Red Branch kings?

FERGUS

This would I say, most wise of living souls:
Young subtle Conchubar sat close by me
When I gave judgment, and his words were wise,
And what to me was burden without end,
To him seemed easy, so I laid the crown
Upon his head to cast away my sorrow.

DRUID

What would you, king of the proud Red Branch kings?

FERGUS

A king and proud! and that is my despair.
I feast amid my people on the hill,
And pace the woods, and drive my chariot wheels
In the white border of the murmuring sea;
And still I feel the crown upon my head.

DRUID

What would you, Fergus?

FERGUS

Be no more a king
But learn the dreaming wisdom that is yours.

DRUID

Look on my thin grey hair and hollow cheeks
And on these hands that may not lift the sword,
This body trembling like a wind-blown reed.
No woman's loved me, no man sought my help.

FERGUS

A king is but a foolish labourer
Who wastes his blood to be another's dream.

DRUID

Take, if you must, this little bag of dreams;
Unloose the cord, and they will wrap you round.

FERGUS

I see my life go drifting like a river
From change to change; I have been many things,
A green drop in the surge, a gleam of light
Upon a sword, a fir-tree on a hill,
An old slave grinding at a heavy quern,
A king sitting upon a chair of gold,
And all these things were wonderful and great;
But now I have grown nothing, knowing all,
Ah! Druid, Druid, how great webs of sorrow
Lay hidden in the small slate-coloured thing?

CUCHULAIN'S FIGHT WITH THE SEA

A MAN came slowly from the setting sun,
To Emer, raddling raiment in her dun,
And said, "I am that swineherd, whom you bid
Go watch the road between the wood and tide,
But now I have no need to watch it more."

Then Emer cast the web upon the floor,
And raising arms all raddled with the dye;
Parted her lips with a loud sudden cry.

That swineherd stared upon her face and said:
"No man alive, no man among the dead,
Has won the gold his cars of battle bring."

"But if your master comes home triumphing
Why are you pale and shake from foot to crown?"

Thereon he shook the more and caſt him down
Upon the web-heaped floor, and cried his word:
"With him is one sweet-throated like a bird."

"You dare me to my face," and thereupon
She smote with raddled fiſt, and where her son
Herded the cattle came with ſtumbling feet,
And cried with angry voice, "It is not meet
To idle life away, a common herd."

"I have long waited, mother, for that word:
But wherefore now?"

"There is a man to die;
You have the heaviest arm under the sky."

"Whether under its daylight or the ſtars
My father ſtands amid his battle cars."

"But you have grown to be the taller man.

"Yet somewhere under ſtarlight or the sun
My father ſtands amid his battle cars."

"But he is old and sad with many wars."

"I only ask what way my journey lies.
For He who made you bitter, made you wise."

"The Red Branch camp in a great company
Between wood's rim and the horses of the sea.
Go there, and light a camp fire at wood's rim;
But tell your name and lineage to him
Whose blade compels, and wait till they have found
Some feating man that the same oath has bound."

Among those feasting kings Cuchulain dwelt,
And his young sweetheart close beside him knelt,
Stared on the mournful wonder of his eyes,
Even as Spring upon the ancient skies,
And pondered on the glory of his days;
And all around the harp-string told his praise,
And Conchubar, the Red Branch king of kings,
With his own fingers touched the brazen strings.

At last Cuchulain spake, "Some man has made
His evening fire amid the leafy shade.
I have often heard him singing to and fro,
I have often heard the sweet sound of his bow,
Seek out what man he is."

One went and came.
"He bade me let all know he gives his name
At the sword point, and waits till we have found
Some feating man that the same oath has bound."

Cuchulain cried, "I am the only man
Of all this host so bound from childhood on."

After short fighting in the leafy shade,
He spake to the young man, "Is there no maid
Who loves you, no white arms to wrap you round,
Or do you long for the dim sleepy ground,
That you have come and dared me to my face?"

"The dooms of men are in God's hidden place."

"Your head a while seemed like a woman's head
That I loved once."

Again the fighting sped,
But now the war rage in Cuchulain woke,
And through that new blade's guard the old blade
broke,
And pierced him.

"Speak before your breath is done."

"Cuchulain I, mighty Cuchulain's son."

"I put you from your pain. I can no more."

While day its burden on to evening bore,
With head bowed on his knees Cuchulain stayed;
Then Conchubar sent that sweet-throated maid,
And she, to win him, his grey hair caressed;
In vain her arms, in vain her soft white breast.
Then Conchubar, the subtlest of all men,
Ranking his Druids round him ten by ten,
Spake thus, "Cuchulain will dwell there and brood,
For three days more in dreadful quietude,
And then arise, and raving slay us all.
Chaunt in his ear delusions magical,
That he may fight the horses of the sea."
The Druids took them to their mystery,
And chanted for three days.

Cuchulain stirred,
Stared on the horses of the sea, and heard
The cars of battle and his own name cried;
And fought with the invulnerable tide.

THE ROSE OF THE WORLD

WHO dreamed that beauty passes like a dream?
From these red lips, with all their mournful pride,
Mournful that no new wonder may betide,
Troy passed away in one high funeral gleam,
And Usna's children died.

We and the labouring world are passing by:
Amid men's souls, that waver and give place,
Like the pale waters in their wintry race,
Under the passing stars, foam of the sky,
Lives on this lonely face.

Bow down, archangels, in your dim abode:
Before you were, or any hearts to beat,
Weary and kind one lingered by His seat;
He made the world to be a grassy road
Before her wandering feet.

THE ROSE OF PEACE

If Michael, leader of God's host
When Heaven and Hell are met,
Looked down on you from Heaven's door-post
He would his deeds forget.

Brooding no more upon God's wars
In his Divine homestead,
He would go weave out of the stars
A chaplet for your head.

And all folk seeing him bow down,
And white stars tell your praise,
Would come at last to God's great town,
Led on by gentle ways;

And God would bid His warfare cease,
Saying all things were well;
And softly make a rosy peace,
A peace of Heaven with Hell.

THE ROSE OF BATTLE

Rose of all Roses, Rose of all the World!
The tall thought-woven sails, that flap unfurled
Above the tide of hours, trouble the air,
And God's bell buoyed to be the water's care;
While hushed from fear, or loud with hope, a band
With blown, spray-dabbled hair gather at hand.
Turn if you may from battles never done,
I call, as they go by me one by one,
Danger no refuge holds, and war no peace,
For him who hears love sing and never cease,
Beside her clean-swept hearth, her quiet shade:
But gather all for whom no love hath made
A woven silence, or but came to cast
A song into the air, and singing past
To smile on the pale dawn; and gather you
Who have sought more than is in rain or dew
Or in the sun and moon, or on the earth,
Or sighs amid the wandering, starry mirth,

Or comes in laughter from the sea's sad lips
And wage God's battles in the long grey ships.
The sad, the lonely, the insatiable,
To these Old Night shall all her mystery tell;
God's bell has claimed them by the little cry
Of their sad hearts, that may not live nor die.

Rose of all Roses, Rose of all the World!
You, too, have come where the dim tides are hurled
Upon the wharves of sorrow, and heard ring
The bell that calls us on; the sweet far thing.
Beauty grown sad with its eternity
Made you of us, and of the dim grey sea.
Our long ships loose thought-woven sails and wait,
For God has bid them share an equal fate;
And when at last defeated in His wars,
They have gone down under the same white stars,
We shall no longer hear the little cry
Of our sad hearts, that may not live ncr die.

A FAERY SONG

Sung by the people of faery over Diarmuid and Grania, in their bridal sleep under a Cromlech.

We who are old, old and gay,
O so old!
Thousands of years, thousands of years,
If all were told:

Give to these children, new from the world,
Silence and love;
And the long dew-dropping hours of the night,
And the stars above:

Give to these children, new from the world,
Rest far from men,
Is anything better, anything better?
Tell us it then:

Us who are old, old and gay,
O so old!
Thousands of years, thousands of years,
If all were told.

THE LAKE ISLE OF INNISFREE

I WILL arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles
made:
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey
bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes
dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the
cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple
glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements
grey
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

A CRADLE SONG

The angels are stooping
Above your bed;
They weary of trooping
With the whimpering dead.

God's laughing in heaven
To see you so good;
The Sailing Seven
Are gay with His mood.

I sigh that kiss you,
For I must own
That I shall miss you
When you have grown.

THE PITY OF LOVE

A PITY beyond all telling
Is hid in the heart of love:
The folk who are buying and selling,
The clouds on their journey above,
The cold wet winds ever blowing,
And the shadowy hazel grove
Where mouse-grey waters are flowing,
Threaten the head that I love.

THE SORROW OF LOVE

The brawling of a sparrow in the eaves,
The brilliant moon and all the milky sky,
And all that famous harmony of leaves,
Had blotted out man's image and his cry.

A girl arose that had red mournful lips
And seemed the greatness of the world in tears,
Doomed like Odysseus and the labouring ships
And proud as Priam murdered with his peers;

Arose, and on the instant clamorous eaves,
A climbing moon upon an empty sky,
And all that lamentation of the leaves,
Could but compose man's image and his cry.

WHEN YOU ARE OLD

WHEN you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read ; and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep ;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face ;

And bending down beside the glowing bars
Murmur, a little sadly, how love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

THE WHITE BIRDS

I WOULD that we were, my beloved, white birds on the
 foam of the sea!
We tire of the flame of the meteor, before it can fade
 and flee;
And the flame of the blue star of twilight, hung low on
 the rim of the sky,
Has awaked in our hearts, my beloved, a sadness that
 may not die.

A weariness comes from those dreamers, dew dabbled,
 the lily and rose;
Ah, dream not of them, my beloved, the flame of the
 meteor that goes,
Or the flame of the blue star that lingers hung low
 in the fall of the dew:
For I would we were changed to white birds on the
 wandering foam: I and you!

I am haunted by numberless islands, and many a
Danaan shore,
Where Time would surely forget us, and Sorrow
come near us no more;
Soon far from the rose and the lily, and free of the
flames would we be,
Were we only white birds, my beloved, buoyed out
on the foam of the sea!

A DREAM OF DEATH

I DREAMED that one had died in a strange place
Near no accustomed hand;
And they had nailed the boards above her face,
The peasants of that land,
Wondering to lay her in that solitude,
And raised above her mound
A cross they had made out of two bits of wood,
And planted cypress round;
And left her to the indifferent stars above
Until I carved these words:
She was more beautiful than thy first love,
But now lies under boards.

THE COUNTESS CATHLEEN IN PARADISE

ALL the heavy days are over ;
Leave the body's coloured pride
Underneath the grass and clover,
With the feet laid side by side.

Bathed in flaming founts of duty
She'll not ask a haughty dress ;
Carry all that mournful beauty,
To the scented oaken press.

Did the kiss of Mother Mary,
Put that music in her face ?
Yet she goes with footstep wary,
Full of earth's old timid grace.

'Mong the feet of angels seven
What a dancer glimmering !
All the heavens bow down to heaven,
Flame to flame and wing to wing.

WHO GOES WITH FERGUS?

WHO will go drive with Fergus now,
And pierce the deep wood's woven shade,
And dance upon the level shore?
Young man, lift up your russet brow,
And lift your tender eyelids, maid,
And brood on hopes and fears no more.

And no more turn aside and brood
Upon Love's bitter mystery;
For Fergus rules the brazen cars,
And rules the shadows of the wood,
And the white breast of the dim sea
And all dishevelled wandering stars.

THE MAN WHO DREAMED OF FAERYLAND

He stood among a crowd at Drumahair;
His heart hung all upon a silken dress,
And he had known at last some tenderness,
Before earth made of him her sleepy care;
But when a man poured fish into a pile,
It seemed they raised their little silver heads,
And sang how day a Druid twilight sheds,
Upon a dim, green, well-beloved isle,
Where people love beside star-laden seas;
How Time may never mar their faery vows
Under the woven roofs of quicken boughs:
The singing shook him out of his new ease.

He wandered by the sands of Lisadell;
His mind ran all on money cares and fears,
And he had known at last some prudent years
Before they heaped his grave under the hill;

But while he passed before a plashy place,
A lug-worm with its grey and muddy mouth
Sang how somewhere to north or weſt or south
There dwelt a gay, exulting, gentle race;
And how beneath those three times blessed skies
A Danaan fruitage makes a shower of moons,
And as it falls awakens leafy tunes:
And at that singing he was no more wise.

He mused beside the well of Scanavin,
He mused upon his mockers: without fail
His sudden vengeance were a country tale,
Now that deep earth has drunk his body in;
But one small knot-grass growing by the pool
Told where, ah, little, all-unneeded voice!
Old Silence bids a lonely folk rejoice,
And chaplet their calm brows with leafage cool,
And how, when fades the sea-ſtrewn rose of day,
A gentle feeling wraps them like a fleece,
And all their trouble dies into its peace:
The tale drove his fine angry mood away.

He slept under the hill of Lugnagall;
And might have known at laſt unhaunted sleep
Under that cold and vapour-turbaned ſteep,

Now that old earth had taken man and all:
Were not the worms that spired about his bones
Proclaiming with a low and reedy cry,
That God had leant His hands out of the sky,
To bless that isle with honey in His tones;
That none may feel the power of squall and wave
And no one any leaf-crowned dancer miss
Until He burn up Nature with a kiss:
The man has found no comfort in the grave.

THE DEDICATION TO A BOOK OF STORIES SELECTED FROM THE IRISH NOVELISTS

THERE was a green branch hung with many a bell
When her own people ruled this tragic Eire;
And from its murmuring greenness, calm of faery,
A Druid kindness, on all hearers fell.

It charmed away the merchant from his guile,
And turned the farmer's memory from his cattle,
And hushed in sleep the roaring ranks of battle:
And all grew friendly for a little while.

Ah, Exiles wandering over lands and seas,
And planning, plotting always that some morrow
May set a stone upon ancestral Sorrow?
I also bear a bell branch full of ease.

I tore it from green boughs winds tore and tossed
Until the sap of summer had grown weary!
I tore it from the barren boughs of Eire,
That country where a man can be so crossed;

Can be so battered, badgered and destroyed
That he's a loveless man: gay bells bring laughter,
That shakes a mouldering cobweb from the rafter,
And yet the saddest chimes are best enjoyed

Gay bells or sad, they bring you memories
Of half-forgotten innocent old places:
We and our bitterness have left no traces
On Munster grass and Connemara skies.

THE LAMENTATION OF THE OLD PENSIONER

ALTHOUGH I shelter from the rain
Under a broken tree
My chair was nearest to the fire
In every company.
That talked of love or politics
E'er time transfigured me.

Though lads are making pikes again
For some conspiracy,
And crazy rascals rage their fill
At human tyranny;
My contemplations are of time
That has transfigured me.

There's not a woman turns her face
Upon a broken tree,
And yet the beauties that I loved
Are in my memory;
I spit into the face of Time
That has transfigured me.

THE BALLAD OF FATHER GILLIGAN

THE old priest Peter Gilligan
Was weary night and day;
For half his flock were in their beds,
Or under green sods lay.

Once, while he nodded on a chair,
At the moth-hour of eve,
Another poor man sent for him,
And he began to grieve.

"I have no rest, nor joy, nor peace,
For people die and die";
And after cried he, "God forgive!
"My body spake, not I!"

He knelt, and leaning on the chair
He prayed and fell asleep;
And the moth-hour went from the fields,
And stars began to peep.

They slowly into millions grew,
And leaves shook in the wind;
And God covered the world with shade,
And whispered to mankind.

Upon the time of sparrow chirp
When the moths came once more,
The old priest Peter Gilligan
Stood upright on the floor.

"Mavrone, mavrone! the man has died,
While I slept on the chair";
He roused his horse out of its sleep,
And rode with little care.

He rode now as he never rode,
By rocky lane and fen;
The sick man's wife opened the door:
"Father! you come again!"

"And is the poor man dead?" he cried.
"He died an hour ago,"
The old priest Peter Gilligan
In grief swayed to and fro.

" When you were gone, he turned and died
As merry as a bird."
The old priest Peter Gilligan
He knelt him at that word.

" He who hath made the night of stars
For souls, who tire and bleed,
Sent one of His great angels down
To help me in my need.

" He who is wrapped in purple robes,
With planets in His care,
Had pity on the least of things
Asleep upon a chair.'

THE TWO TREES

Beloved, gaze in thine own heart,
The holy tree is growing there;
From joy the holy branches start,
And all the trembling flowers they bear,
The changing colours of its fruit
Have dowered the stars with merry light;
The surety of its hidden root
Has planted quiet in the night;
The shaking of its leafy head
Has given the waves their melody,
And made my lips and music wed,
Murmuring a wizard song for thee.
There, through bewildered branches, go
Winged Loves borne on in gentle strife,
Tossing and tossing to and fro
The flaming circle of our life.

When looking on their shaken hair,
And dreaming how they dance and dart,
Thine eyes grow full of tender care:
Beloved, gaze in thine own heart.

Gaze no more in the bitter glass
The demons, with their subtle guile,
Lift up before us when they pass,
Or only gaze a little while;
For there a fatal image grows,
That the stormy night receives,
Roots half hidden under snows,
Broken boughs and blackened leaves.
All things turn to barrenness
In the dim-glass the demons hold,
The glass of outer weariness,
Made when God slept in times of old.
There, through the broken branches, go
The ravens of unresting thought;
Peering and flying to and fro
To see men's souls bartered and bought.
When they are heard upon the wind,
And when they shake their wings; alas!
Thy tender eyes grow all unkind:
Gaze no more in the bitter glass.

TO IRELAND IN THE COMING TIMES

Know, that I would accounted be
True brother of that company,
That sang to sweeten Ireland's wrong,
Ballad and story, rann and song;
Nor be I any less of them,
Because the red-rose-bordered hem
Of her, whose history began
Before God made the angelic clan,
Trails all about the written page.
When Time began to rant and rage
The measure of her flying feet
Made Ireland's heart begin to beat;
And Time bade all his candles flare
To light a measure here and there;
And may the thoughts of Ireland brood
Upon a measured quietude.

Nor may I less be counted one
With Davis, Mangan, Ferguson,
Because to him, who ponders well,
My rhymes more than their rhyming tell
Of things discovered in the deep,
Where only body's laid asleep.
For the elemental creatures go
About my table to and fro,
That hurry from unmeasured mind
To rant and rage in flood and wind;
Yet he who treads in measured ways
May surely barter gaze for gaze.
Man ever journeys on with them
After the red-rose-bordered hem.
Ah, faeries, dancing under the moon,
A Druid land, a Druid tune!

While still I may, I write for you
The love I lived, the dream I knew.
From our birthday, until we die,
Is but the winking of an eye;
And we, our singing and our love,
What measurer Time has lit above,
And all benighted things that go
About my table to and fro,

Are passing on to where may be,
In truth's consuming ecstasy
No place for love and dream at all;
For God goes by with white foot-fall.
I cast my heart into my rhymes,
That you, in the dim coming times,
May know how my heart went with them
After the red-rose-bordered hem.

THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE

O Rose, thou art sick.

WILLIAM BLAKE.

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

MAURTEEN BRUIN

BRIDGET BRUIN

SHAWN BRUIN

MARY BRUIN

FATHER HART

A FAERY CHILD

The Scene is laid in the Barony of Kilmacowen, in the County of Sligo, and at a remote time.

NOTE.—The passages enclosed in square brackets are those left out when the play is performed at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin.

SCENE.—*A room with a hearth on the floor in the middle of a deep alcove to the Right. There are benches in the alcove and a table; and a crucifix on the wall. The alcove is full of a glow of light from the fire. There is an open door facing the audience to the Left, and to the left of this a bench. Through the door one can see the forest. It is night, but the moon or a late sunset glimmers through the trees and carries the eye far off into a vague, mysterious world.* MAURTEEN BRUIN, SHAWN BRUIN, *and* BRIDGET BRUIN *sit in the alcove at the table or about the fire. They are dressed in the costume of some remote time, and near them sits an old priest,* FATHER HART. *He may be dressed as a friar. There is food and drink upon the table.* MARY BRUIN *stands by the door reading a book. If she looks up she can see through the door into the wood.*

BRIDGET

Because I bid her clean the pots for supper
She took that old book down out of the thatch;
She has been doubled over it ever since.
We should be deafened by her groans and moans
Had she to work as some do, Father Hart;
Get up at dawn like me and mend and scour

Or ride abroad in the boiśterous night like you,
The pyx and blessed bread under your arm.

SHAWN

Mother, you are too cross.

BRIDGET

You've married her,
And fear to vex her and so take her part.

MAUREEN (*to* FATHER HART)

It is but right that youth should side with youth;
She quarrels with my wife a bit at times,
And is too deep juśt now in the old book!
But do not blame her greatly; [she will grow
As quiet as a puff-ball in a tree
When but the moons of marriage dawn and die
For half a score of times].

FATHER HART

Their hearts are wild,
As be the hearts of birds, till children come.

BRIDGET

She would not mind the kettle, milk the cow,
Or even lay the knives and spread the cloth.

SHAWN

Mother, if only——

MAURTEEN

Shawn, this is half empty;
Go, bring up the best bottle that we have.

FATHER HART

I *never* saw her read a book before,
What can it be?

MAURTEEN (*to* SHAWN)

What are you waiting for?
You must not shake it when you draw the cork;
It's precious wine, so take your time about it.
(*To Priest.*) (SHAWN *goes.*)
[There was a Spaniard wrecked at Ocris Head,
When I was young, and I have still some bottles.]
He cannot bear to hear her blamed; the book
Has lain up in the thatch these fifty years;
My father told me my grandfather wrote it,
And killed a heifer for the binding of it—
[But supper's spread, and we can talk and eat]
It was little good he got out of the book,

Because it filled his house with rambling fiddlers,
And rambling ballad-makers and the like.
[The griddle-bread is there in front of you.]
Colleen, what is the wonder in that book,
That you must leave the bread to cool? Had I
Or had my father read or written books
There were no stocking stuffed with yellow guineas
To come when I am dead to Shawn and you.

FATHER HART

You should not fill your head with foolish dreams.
What are you reading?

MARY

How a Princess Edane,
A daughter of a King of Ireland, heard
A voice singing on a May Eve like this,
And followed half awake and half asleep,
Until she came into the Land of Faery,
Where nobody gets old and godly and grave,
Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,
Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue.
And she is still there, busied with a dance
Deep in the dewy shadow of a wood,
[Or where stars walk upon a mountain-top].

MAURTEEN

Persuade the colleen to put down the book;
My grandfather would mutter just such things,
And he was no judge of a dog or a horse,
And any idle boy could blarney him;
Just speak your mind.

FATHER HART

Put it away, my colleen;
[God spreads the heavens above us like great wings
And gives a little round of deeds and days,
And then come the wrecked angels and set snares,
And bait them with light hopes and heavy dreams,
Until the heart is puffed with pride and goes
Half shuddering and half joyous from God's peace],
For it was some wrecked angel, blind with tears,
Who flattered Edane's heart with merry words.
My colleen, I have seen some other girls
Restless and ill at ease, but years went by
And they grew like their neighbours and were glad
In minding children, working at the churn,
And gossiping of weddings and of wakes;
[For life moves out of a red flare of dreams
Into a common light of common hours,
Until old age bring the red flare again].

MAURTEEN

That's true—but she's too young to know it's true.

BRIDGET

She's old enough to know that it is wrong
To mope and idle.

MAURTEEN

I've little blame for her;
She's dull when my big son is in the fields,
And that and maybe this good woman's tongue
Have driven her to hide among her dreams
Like children from the dark under the bed-clothes.

BRIDGET

She'd never do a turn if I were silent.

MAURTEEN

And maybe it is natural upon May Eve
To dream of the good people. But tell me, girl,
If you've the branch of blessed quicken wood
That women hang upon the post of the door
That they may send good luck into the house?
Remember they may steal new-married brides

After the fall of twilight on May Eve,
Or what old women mutter at the fire
Is but a pack of lies.

FATHER HART

It may be truth.
We do not know the limit of those powers
God has permitted to the evil spirits
For some mysterious end. You have done right (*to* MARY);
It's well to keep old innocent customs up.

(MARY BRUIN *has taken a bough of quicken wood from a seat and hung it on a nail in the door-post. A girl child strangely dressed, perhaps in faery green, comes out of the wood and takes it away.*)

MARY

I had no sooner hung it on the nail
Before a child ran up out of the wind;
She has caught it in her hand and fondled it;
[Her face is pale as water before dawn].

FATHER HART

Whose child can this be?

MAURTEEN

No one's child at all.
She often dreams that some one has gone by,
When there was nothing but a puff of wind.

MARY

They have taken away the blessed quicken wood,
They will not bring good luck into the house;
Yet I am glad that I was courteous to them,
For are not they, likewise, children of God?

FATHER HART

Colleen, they are the children of the fiend,
And they have power until the end of Time,
When God shall fight with them a great pitched battle
And hack them into pieces.

MARY

He will smile,
Father, perhaps, and open His great door.

FATHER HART

Did but the lawless angels see that door

They would fall, slain by everlasting peace;
And when such angels knock upon our doors,
Who goes with them must drive through the same
storm.

(*A thin old arm comes round the door-post and knocks and beckons. It is clearly seen in the silvery light.* MARY BRUIN *goes to door and stands in it for a moment.* MAURTEEN BRUIN *is busy filling* FATHER HART'S *plate.* BRIDGET BRUIN *stirs the fire.*)

MARY (*coming to table*)

There's somebody out there that beckons me
And raised her hand as though it held a cup,
And she was drinking from it, so it may be
That she is thirsty.

(*She takes milk from the table and carries it to the door.*)

FATHER HART

That will be the child
That you would have it was no child at all.

BRIDGET

[And maybe, Father, what he said was true;

For there is not another night in the year
So wicked as to-night.

MAURTEEN

Nothing can harm us
While the good Father's underneath our roof.

MARY

A little queer old woman dressed in green.

BRIDGET

The good people beg for milk and fire
Upon May Eve—woe to the house that gives,
For they have power upon it for a year.

MAURTEEN

Hush, woman, hush!

BRIDGET

She's given milk away.
I knew she would bring evil on the house

MAURTEEN

Who was it?

MARY

Both the tongue and face were strange.

MAURTEEN

Some strangers came last week to Clover Hill;
She must be one of them.]

BRIDGET

I am afraid.

FATHER HART

The Cross will keep all evil from the house
While it hangs there.

MAURTEEN

Come, sit beside me, colleen,
And put away your dreams of discontent,
For I would have you light up my last days,
Like the good glow of the turf; and when I die
You'll be the wealthiest hereabout, for, colleen,
I have a stocking full of yellow guineas
Hidden away where nobody can find it.

BRIDGET

You are the fool of every pretty face,
And I must spare and pinch that my son's wife
May have all kinds of ribbons for her head.

MAURTEEN

Do not be cross; she is a right good girl!
[The butter is by your elbow, Father Hart.
My colleen, have not Fate and Time and Change
Done well for me and for old Bridget there?]
We have a hundred acres of good land,
And sit beside each other at the fire.
I have this reverend Father for my friend,
I look upon your face and my son's face—
We've put his plate by yours—and here he comes,
And brings with him the only thing we have
lacked,
Abundance of good wine. (SHAWN *comes in.*) Stir up
the fire,
And put new turf upon it till it blaze;
To watch the turf-smoke coiling from the fire,
And feel content and wisdom in your heart,
This is the best of life; [when we are young
We long to tread a way none trod before,

But find the excellent old way through love,
And through the care of children, to the hour
For bidding Fate and Time and Change goodbye.]

(MARY *stands for a moment in the door, and takes a sod of turf from the fire and goes out through the door.* SHAWN *follows her and meets her coming in.*)

SHAWN

What is it draws you to the chill o' the wood?
There is a light among the stems of the trees
That makes one shiver.

MARY

[A little queer old man
Made me a sign to show he wanted fire
To light his pipe.]

BRIDGET

You've given milk and fire
Upon the unluckiest night of the year and brought,
For all you know, evil upon the house.
Before you married you were idle and fine
And went about with ribbons on your head;
And now—no, Father, I will speak my mind—
She is not a fitting wife for any man——

SHAWN

Be quiet, Mother!

MAURTEEN

You are much too cross.

MARY

What do I care if I have given this house,
Where I must hear all day a bitter tongue,
Into the power of faeries!

BRIDGET

You know well
How calling the good people by that name,
Or talking of them over much at all,
May bring all kinds of evil on the house.

MARY

Come, faeries, take me out of this dull house!
Let me have all the freedom I have lost;
Work when I will and idle when I will!
Faeries, come take me out of this dull world,
For I would ride with you upon the wind.
[Run on the top of the dishevelled tide,]
And dance upon the mountains like a flame.

FATHER HART

You cannot know the meaning of your words.

MARY

Father, I am right weary of four tongues:
A tongue that is too crafty and too wise,
A tongue that is too godly and too grave,
A tongue that is more bitter than the tide,
And a kind tongue too full of drowsy love,
Of drowsy love and my captivity.

(SHAWN BRUIN *leads her to a seat at the left of the door.*)

SHAWN

Do not blame me; I often lie awake
Thinking that all things trouble your bright head.
How beautiful it is—your broad pale forehead
Under a cloudy blossoming of hair!
Sit down beside me here—these are too old,
And have forgotten they were ever young.

MARY

O, you are the great door-post of this house,
And I the branch of blessed quicken wood,

And if I could I'd hang upon the post,
Till I had brought good luck into the house.

(She would put her arms about him, but looks shyly at the priest and lets her arms fall.)

FATHER HART

My daughter, take his hand—by love alone
God binds us to Himself and to the hearth,
That shuts us from the waste beyond His peace,
From maddening freedom and bewildering light.

SHAWN

Would that the world were mine to give it you,
And not its quiet hearths alone, but even
All that bewilderment of light and freedom,
If you would have it.

MARY

I would take the world
And break it into pieces in my hands
To see you smile watching it crumble away.

SHAWN

Then I would mould a world of fire and dew,
With no one bitter, grave or over wise,

And nothing marred or old to do you wrong,
And crowd the enraptured quiet of the sky
With candles burning to your lonely face.

MARY

Your looks are all the candles that I need.

SHAWN

Once a fly dancing in a beam of the sun,
Or the light wind blowing out of the dawn,
Could fill your heart with dreams none other knew,
But now the indissoluble sacrament
Has mixed your heart that was most proud and cold
With my warm heart for ever; the sun and moon
Must fade and heaven be rolled up like a scroll;
But your white spirit still walks by my spirit.

(*A voice singing in the wood.*)

MAURTEEN

There's some one singing. Why, it's but a child.
It sang, "The lonely of heart is withered away."
A strange song for a child, but she sings sweetly.
Listen, listen!

(*Goes to door.*)

MARY

O, cling close to me,
Because I have said wicked things to-night.

THE VOICE

The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
The wind blows over the lonely of heart,
And the lonely of heart is withered away
While the faeries dance in a place apart,
Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,
Tossing their milk-white arms in the air;
For they hear the wind laugh and murmur and sing
Of a land where even the old are fair,
And even the wise are merry of tongue;
But I heard a reed of Coolaney say,
"When the wind has laughed and murmured and sung
The lonely of heart is withered away!"

MAURTEEN

Being happy, I would have all others happy,
So I will bring her in out of the cold.

(*He brings in the faery child.*)

THE CHILD

I tire of winds and waters and pale lights.

MAURTEEN

And that's no wonder, for when night has fallen]
The wood's a cold and a bewildering place,
But you are welcome here.

THE CHILD

I am welcome here.
[For when I tire of this warm little house]
There is one here that must away, away.

MAURTEEN

O, listen to her dreamy and strange talk.
Are you not cold?

THE CHILD

I will crouch down beside you,
For I have run a long, long way this night.

BRIDGET

You have a comely shape.

MAURTEEN

Your hair is wet.

BRIDGET

I'll warm your chilly feet.

MAURTEEN

You have come indeed
A long, long way—for I have never seen
Your pretty face—and must be tired and hungry,
Here is some bread and wine.

THE CHILD

The wine is bitter.
Old mother, have you no sweet food for me?

BRIDGET

I have some honey.

(*She goes into the next room.*)

MAURTEEN

You have coaxing ways,
The mother was quite cross before you came.

(BRIDGET *returns with the honey and fills a porringer with milk.*)

BRIDGET

She is the child of gentle people; look
At her white hands and at her pretty dress.

I've brought you some new milk, but wait a while
And I will put it to the fire to warm,
For things well fitted for poor folk like us
Would never please a high-born child like you.

THE CHILD

From dawn, when you must blow the fire ablaze,
You work your fingers to the bone, old mother.
The young may lie in bed and dream and hope,
But you must work your fingers to the bone
Because your heart is old.

BRIDGET

The young are idle.

THE CHILD

Your memories have made you wise, old father;
The young must sigh through many a dream and hope,
But you are wise because your heart is old.

(BRIDGET *gives her more bread and honey.*)

MAURTEEN

O, who would think to find so young a girl
Loving old age and wisdom?

THE CHILD

No more, mother.

MAURTEEN

What a small bite! The milk is ready now. (*Hands it to her.*) What a small sip!

THE CHILD

Put on my shoes, old mother,
For I would like to dance now I have eaten.
The reeds are dancing by Coolaney lake,
And I would like to dance until the reeds
And the white waves have danced themselves asleep.

(BRIDGET *puts on the shoes, and the* CHILD *is about to dance, but suddenly sees the crucifix and shrieks and covers her eyes.*)

What is that ugly thing on the black cross?

FATHER HART

You cannot know how naughty your words are!
That is our Blessed Lord.

THE CHILD

Hide it away!

BRIDGET

I have begun to be afraid again.

THE CHILD

Hide it away!

MAURTEEN

That would be wickedness!

BRIDGET

That would be sacrilege!

THE CHILD

The tortured thing!
Hide it away!

MAURTEEN

Her parents are to blame.

FATHER HART

That is the image of the Son of God.

THE CHILD (*caressing him*)

Hide it away, hide it away!

MAURTEEN

No, no.

FATHER HART

Because you are so young and like a bird,
That must take fright at every stir of the leaves,
I will go take it down.

THE CHILD

Hide it away!
And cover it out of sight and out of mind!

(FATHER HART *takes crucifix from wall and carries it towards inner room.*)

FATHER HART

Since you have come into this barony,
I will instruct you in our blessed faith;
And being so keen of wit you'll soon learn.
(*To the others.*)
We must be tender to all budding things,
Our Maker let no thought of Calvary
Trouble the morning stars in their first song.

(*Puts crucifix in inner room.*)

THE CHILD

Here is level ground for dancing; I will dance.
(*Sings.*)
"The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
The wind blows over the lonely of heart,
And the lonely of heart is withered away."
(*She dances.*)

MARY (*to* SHAWN)

Just now when she came near I thought I heard
Other small steps beating upon the floor,
And a faint music blowing in the wind,
Invisible pipes giving her feet the tune.

SHAWN

I heard no steps but hers.

MARY

I hear them now,
The unholy powers are dancing in the house.

MAURTEEN

Come over here, and if you promise me
Not to talk wickedly of holy things
I will give you something.

THE CHILD

Bring it me, old father.

MAURTEEN

Here are some ribbons that I bought in the town
For my son's wife—but she will let me give them
To tie up that wild hair the winds have tumbled.

THE CHILD

Come, tell me, do you love me?

MAURTEEN

Yes, I love you.

THE CHILD

Ah, but you love this fireside. Do you love me?

FATHER HART

When the Almighty puts so great a share
Of His own ageless youth into a creature,
To look is but to love

THE CHILD

But you love Him?

BRIDGET

She is blaspheming.

THE CHILD

And do you love me too?

MARY

I do not know.

THE CHILD

You love that young man there.
Yet I could make you ride upon the winds,
[Run on the top of the dishevelled tide,]
And dance upon the mountains like a flame.

MARY

Queen of Angels and kind saints defend us!
Some dreadful thing will happen. A while ago
She took away the blessed quicken wood.

FATHER HART

You fear because of her unmeasured prattle;
She knows no better. Child, how old are you?

THE CHILD

When winter sleep's abroad my hair grows thin,
My feet unsteady. When the leaves awaken
My mother carries me in her golden arms;
I'll soon put on my womanhood and marry
The spirits of wood and water, but who can tell
When I was born for the first time? I think
I am much older than the eagle cock
[That blinks and blinks on Ballygawley Hill,]
And he is the oldest thing under the moon.

FATHER HART

O she is of the faery people.

THE CHILD

One called,
I sent my messengers for milk and fire,
She called again and after that I came.

(*All except* SHAWN *and* MARY BRUIN *gather behind the priest for protection.*)

SHAWN (*rising*)

Though you have made all these obedient,
You have not charmed my sight and won from me

A wish or gift to make you powerful;
I'll turn you from the house.

FATHER HART

No, I will face her.

THE CHILD

Because you took away the crucifix
I am so mighty that there's none can pass,
Unless I will it, where my feet have danced
Or where I've whirled my finger-tops.

(SHAWN *tries to approach her and cannot.*)

MAURTEEN

Look, look!
There something stops him—look how he moves his hands
As though he rubbed them on a wall of glass!

FATHER HART

I will confront this mighty spirit alone;
Be not afraid, the Father is with us,
[The Holy martyrs and the Innocents,
The adoring Magi in their coats of mail,]

And He who died and rose on the third day,
[And all the nine angelic hierarchies].

(*The* CHILD *kneels upon the settle beside* MARY *and puts her arms about her.*)

Cry, daughter, to the Angels and the Saints.

THE CHILD

You shall go with me, newly-married bride,
And gaze upon a merrier multitude.
[White-armed Nuala, Aengus of the Birds,
Feacra of the hurtling foam, and him
Who is the ruler of the Western Host,
Finvarra, and their Land of Heart's Desire,]
Where beauty has no ebb, decay no flood,
But joy is wisdom, Time an endless song.
I kiss you and the world begins to fade.

SHAWN

Awake out of that trance—and cover up
Your eyes and ears.

FATHER HART

She must both look and listen
For only the soul's choice can save her now.

Come over to me, daughter; stand beside me;
Think of this house and of your duties in it.

THE CHILD

Stay and come with me, newly-married bride,
For if you hear him you grow like the rest;
Bear children, cook, and bend above the churn,
And wrangle over butter, fowl, and eggs,
Until at last, grown old and bitter of tongue,
You're crouching there and shivering at the grave.

FATHER HART

Daughter, I point you out the way to Heaven.

THE CHILD

But I can lead you, newly-married bride,
Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,
Where nobody gets old and godly and grave,
Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue,
And where kind tongues bring no captivity;
For we are but obedient to the thoughts
That drift into the mind at a wink of the eye.

FATHER HART

By the dear Name of the One crucified,
I bid you, Mary Bruin, come to me.

THE CHILD

I keep you in the name of your own heart.

FATHER HART

Because I put away the crucifix
I am but nothing, and my power is nothing.
I'll bring it here again.

MAURTEEN (*clinging to him*)

No.

BRIDGET

Do not leave us.

FATHER HART

O, let me go before it is too late;
It is my sin alone that brought it all.

(*Singing outside.*)

THE CHILD

I hear them sing, "Come, newly-married bride,
Come, to the woods and waters and pale lights."

MARY

I will go with you.

FATHER HART

She is lost, alas!

THE CHILD (*standing by the door*)

But clinging mortal hope must fall from you,
For we who ride the winds, run on the waves,
And dance upon the mountains are more light
Than dewdrops on the banner of the dawn.

MARY

O, take me with you.

SHAWN

Beloved, I will keep you
I've more than words, I have these arms to hold
you,

Nor all the faery host, do what they please,
Shall ever make me loose you from these arms.

MARY

Dear face! Dear voice!

THE CHILD

Come, newly-married bride.

MARY

I always loved her world—and yet—and yet——

THE CHILD

White bird, white bird, come with me, little bird.

MARY

She calls me!

THE CHILD

Come with me, little bird.
(*Distant dancing figures appear in the wood.*)

MARY

I can hear songs and dancing.

SHAWN

Stay with me.

MARY

I think that I would stay—and yet—and yet——

THE CHILD

Come, little bird, with crest of gold.

MARY (*very softly*)

And yet——

THE CHILD

Come, little bird with silver feet!

(MARY BRUIN *dies, and the* CHILD *goes.*)

SHAWN

She is dead!

BRIDGET

Come from that image; body and soul are gone.
You have thrown your arms about a drift of leaves,
Or bole of an ash-tree changed into her image.

FATHER HART

Thus do the spirits of evil snatch their prey,
Almost out of the very hand of God;
And day by day their power is more and more,
And men and women leave old paths, for pride
Comes knocking with thin knuckles on the heart.

(Outside there are dancing figures, and it may be a white bird, and many voices singing:)

" The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
The wind blows over the lonely of heart,
And the lonely of heart is withered away;
[While the faeries dance in a place apart,
Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,
Tossing their milk-white arms in the air;
For they hear the wind laugh and murmur and sing
Of a land where even the old are fair,
And even the wise are merry of tongue;
But I heard a reed of Coolaney say—
'When the wind has laughed and murmured and sung,
The lonely of heart is withered away.' "]

CROSSWAYS

" *The stars are threshed, and the souls are threshed from their husks.*"—WILLIAM BLAKE.

To A. E.

THE SONG OF THE HAPPY SHEPHERD

THE woods of Arcady are dead,
And over is their antique joy;
Of old the world on dreaming fed;
Grey Truth is now her painted toy;
Yet still she turns her restless head:
But O, sick children of the world,
Of all the many changing things
In dreary dancing past us whirled,
To the cracked tune that Chronos sings,
Words alone are certain good.
Where are now the warring kings,
Word be-mockers?—By the Rood
Where are now the warring kings?
An idle word is now their glory,
By the stammering schoolboy said,
Reading some entangled story:
The kings of the old time are dead;

The wandering earth herself may be
Only a sudden flaming word,
In clanging space a moment heard,
Troubling the endless reverie.

Then nowise worship dusty deeds,
Nor seek; for this is also sooth;
To hunger fiercely after truth,
Lest all thy toiling only breeds
New dreams, new dreams; there is no truth
Saving in thine own heart. Seek, then,
No learning from the starry men,
Who follow with the optic glass
The whirling ways of stars that pass—
Seek, then, for this is also sooth,
No word of theirs—the cold star-bane
Has cloven and rent their hearts in twain,
And dead is all their human truth.
Go gather by the humming-sea
Some twisted, echo-harbouring shell,
And to its lips thy story tell,
And they thy comforters will be,
Rewarding in melodious guile,
Thy fretful words a little while,
Till they shall singing fade in ruth

And die a pearly brotherhood ;
For words alone are certain good :
Sing, then, for this is also sooth.

I must be gone : there is a grave
Where daffodil and lily wave,
And I would please the hapless faun,
Buried under the sleepy ground,
With mirthful songs before the dawn,
His shouting days with mirth were crowned ;
And still I dream he treads the lawn,
Walking ghostly in the dew,
Pierced by my glad singing through,
My songs of old earth's dreamy youth :
But ah ! she dreams not now ; dream thou !
For fair are poppies on the brow :
Dream, dream, for this is also sooth.

THE SAD SHEPHERD

There was a man whom Sorrow named his friend
And he, of his high comrade Sorrow dreaming,
Went walking with slow steps along the gleaming
And humming sands, where windy surges wend:
And he called loudly to the stars to bend
From their pale thrones and comfort him, but they
Among themselves laugh on and sing alway:
And then the man whom Sorrow named his friend
Cried out, *Dim sea, hear my most piteous story!*
The sea swept on and cried her old cry still,
Rolling along in dreams from hill to hill;
He fled the persecution of her glory
And, in a far-off, gentle valley stopping,
Cried all his story to the dewdrops glistening.
But naught they heard, for they are always listening,
The dewdrops, for the sound of their own dropping.

And then the man whom Sorrow named his friend,
Sought once again the shore, and found a shell,
And thought, *I will my heavy story tell*
Till my own words, re-echoing shall send
Their sadness through a hollow, pearly heart ;
And my own tale again for me shall sing,
And my own whispering words be comforting,
And lo ! my ancient burden may depart.
Then he sang softly nigh the pearly rim ;
But the sad dweller by the sea-ways lone
Changed all he sang to inarticulate moan
Among her wildering whirls, forgetting him.

THE CLOAK, THE BOAT, AND THE SHOES

"WHAT do you make so fair and bright?"

"I make the cloak of Sorrow:
O, lovely to see in all men's sight
Shall be the cloak of Sorrow,
In all men's sight."

"What do you build with sails for flight?"

"I build a boat for Sorrow,
O, swift on the seas all day and night
Saileth the rover Sorrow,
All day and night."

"What do you weave with wool so white?"

"I weave the shoes of Sorrow,
Soundless shall be the footfall light
In all men's ears of Sorrow,
Sudden and light."

ANASHUYA AND VIJAYA

A little Indian temple in the Golden Age. Around it a garden; around that the forest. ANASHUYA, *the young priestess, kneeling within the temple.*

ANASHUYA

SEND peace on all the lands and flickering corn.—
O, may tranquillity walk by his elbow
When wandering in the forest, if he love
No other.—Hear, and may the indolent flocks
Be plentiful.—And if he love another,
May panthers end him.—Hear, and load our king
With wisdom hour by hour.—May we two stand,
When we are dead, beyond the setting suns,
A little from the other shades apart,
With mingling hair, and play upon one lute.

VIJAYA [*entering and throwing a lily at her*]
Hail! hail, my Anashuya.

ANASHUYA

No: be still.
I, priestess of this temple, offer up
Prayers for the land.

VIJAYA

I will wait here, Amrita.

ANASHUYA

By mighty Brahma's ever rustling robe,
Who is Amrita? Sorrow of all sorrows
Another fills your mind.

VIJAYA

My mother's name.

ANASHUYA [*sings, coming out of the temple*]

A sad, sad thought went by me slowly:
Sigh, O you little stars! O, sigh and shake your blue apparel!
The sad, sad thought has gone from me now wholly:
Sing, O you little stars! O, sing and raise your rapturous carol
To mighty Brahma, he who made you many as the sands,
And laid you on the gates of evening with his quiet hands.

[*Sits down on the steps of the temple.*]

Vijaya, I have brought my evening rice;
The sun has laid his chin on the grey wood,
Weary, with all his poppies gathered round him.

VIJAYA

The hour when Kama, full of sleepy laughter,
Rises, and showers abroad his fragrant arrows,
Piercing the twilight with their murmuring barbs.

ANASHUYA

See how the sacred old flamingoes come,
Painting with shadow all the marble steps:
Aged and wise, they seek their wonted perches
Within the temple, devious walking, made
To wander by their melancholy minds.
Yon tall one eyes my supper; chase him away,
Far, far away. I named him after you.
He is a famous fisher; hour by hour
He ruffles with his bill the minnowed streams.
Ah! there he snaps my rice. I told you so.
Now cuff him off. He's off! A kiss for you,
Because you saved my rice. Have you no thanks?

VIJAYA [*sings*]

Sing you of her, O first few stars,
Whom Brahma, touching with his finger, praises, for you hold
The van of wandering quiet; ere you be too calm and old

Sing, turning in your cars,
Sing, till you raise your hands and sigh, and from your car heads peer,
With all your whirling hair, and drop many an azure tear.

ANASHUYA

What know the pilots of the stars of tears?

VIJAYA

Their faces are all worn, and in their eyes
Flashes the fire of sadness, for they see
The icicles that famish all the north,
Where men lie frozen in the glimmering snow;
And in the flaming forests cower the lion
And lioness, with all their whimpering cubs;
And, ever pacing on the verge of things,
The phantom, Beauty, in a mist of tears;
While we alone have round us woven woods,
And feel the softness of each other's hand,
Amrita, while——

ANASHUYA [*going away from him*]
Ah me, you love another,

[*Bursting into tears.*]

And may some dreadful ill befall her quick!

VIJAYA

I loved another; now I love no other.
Among the mouldering of ancient woods
You live, and on the village border she,
With her old father the blind wood-cutter;
I saw her ﬅanding in her door but now.

ANASHUYA

Vijaya, swear to love her never more,

VIJAYA

Ay, ay.

ANASHUYA

Swear by the parents of the gods,
Dread oath, who dwell on sacred Himalay,
On the far Golden Peak; enormous shapes,
Who ﬅill were old when the great sea was young
On their vaﬅ faces myﬅery and dreams;
Their hair along the mountains rolled and filled
From year to year by the unnumbered neﬅs
Of awless birds, and round their ﬅirless feet
The joyous flocks of deer and antelope,
Who never hear the unforgiving hound.
Swear!

VIJAYA

By the parents of the gods, I swear.

ANASHUYA [*sings*]

I have forgiven, O new star!
Maybe you have not heard of us, you have come forth so newly,
You hunter of the fields afar!
Ah, you will know my loved one by his hunter's arrows truly,
Shoot on him shafts of quietness, that he may ever keep
A lonely laughter, and may kiss his hands to me in sleep.

Farewell, Vijaya. Nay, no word, no word;
I, priestess of this temple, offer up
Prayers for the land.

[VIJAYA *goes.*]

O Brahma, guard in sleep
The merry lambs and the complacent kine,
The flies below the leaves, and the young mice
In the tree roots, and all the sacred flocks
Of red flamingo; and my love, Vijaya;
And may no restless fay with fidget finger
Trouble his sleeping: give him dreams of me.

THE INDIAN UPON GOD

I PASSED along the water's edge below the humid trees,
My spirit rocked in evening light, the rushes round
  my knees,
My spirit rocked in sleep and sighs; and saw the
  moorfowl pace
All dripping on a grassy slope, and saw them cease
  to chase
Each other round in circles, and heard the eldest
  speak:
*Who holds the world between His bill and made us strong
  or weak*
Is an undying moorfowl, and He lives beyond the sky
*The rains are from His dripping wing, the moonbeams
  from His eye.*
I passed a little further on and heard a lotus talk:
*Who made the world and ruleth it, He hangeth on a
  stalk.*

For I am in His image made, and all this tinkling tide
Is but a sliding drop of rain between His petals wide.
A little way within the gloom a roebuck raised his eyes
Brimful of starlight, and he said: *The Stamper of the Skies,*
He is a gentle roebuck; for how else, I pray, could He
Conceive a thing so sad and soft, a gentle thing like me?
I passed a little further on and heard a peacock say:
Who made the grass and made the worms and made my feathers gay,
He is a monstrous peacock, and He waveth all the night
His languid tail above us, lit with myriad spots of light.

THE INDIAN TO HIS LOVE

THE island dreams under the dawn
And great boughs drop tranquillity;
The peahens dance on a smooth lawn,
A parrot sways upon a tree,
Raging at his own image in the enamelled sea.

Here we will moor our lonely ship
And wander ever with woven hands,
Murmuring softly lip to lip,
Along the grass, along the sands,
Murmuring how far away are the unquiet lands:

How we alone of mortals are
Hid under quiet bows apart,
While our love grows an Indian star,
A meteor of the burning heart,
One with the tide that gleams, the wings that gleam
and dart,

The heavy boughs, the burnished dove
That moans and sighs a hundred days:
How when we die our shades will rove,
When eve has hushed the feathered ways,
With vapoury footsole among the water's drowsy
blaze.

THE FALLING OF THE LEAVES

AUTUMN is over the long leaves that love us,
And over the mice in the barley sheaves;
Yellow the leaves of the rowan above us,
And yellow the wet wild-strawberry leaves.

The hour of the waning of love has beset us,
And weary and worn are our sad souls now;
Let us part, ere the season of passion forget us,
With a kiss and a tear on thy drooping brow.

EPHEMERA

"YOUR eyes that once were never weary of mine
Are bowed in sorrow under pendulous lids,
Because our love is waning."
And then she:
"Although our love is waning, let us stand
By the lone border of the lake once more,
Together in that hour of gentleness
When the poor tired child, Passion, falls asleep:
How far away the stars seem, and how far
Is our first kiss, and ah, how old my heart!"

Pensive they paced along the faded leaves,
While slowly he whose hand held hers replied:
"Passion has often worn our wandering hearts."

The woods were round them, and the yellow leaves
Fell like faint meteors in the gloom, and once
A rabbit old and lame limped down the path;
Autumn was over him: and now they stood
On the lone border of the lake once more:
Turning, he saw that she had thrust dead leaves
Gathered in silence, dewy as her eyes,
In bosom and hair.

"Ah, do not mourn," he said,
"That we are tired, for other loves await us;
Hate on and love through unrepining hours.
Before us lies eternity; our souls
Are love, and a continual farewell."

THE MADNESS OF KING GOLL

I SAT on cushioned otter skin:
My word was law from Ith to Emen,
And shook at Invar Amargin
The hearts of the world-troubling seamen,
And drove tumult and war away
From girl and boy and man and beast;
The fields grew fatter day by day,
The wild fowl of the air increased;
And every ancient Ollave said,
While he bent down his fading head,
"He drives away the Northern cold."
They will not hush, the leaves a-flutter round me, the beech leaves old.

I sat and mused and drank sweet wine;
A herdsman came from inland valleys,

Crying, the pirates drove his swine
To fill their dark-beaked hollow galleys.
I called my battle-breaking men,
And my loud brazen battle-cars
From rolling vale and rivery glen;
And under the blinking of the stars
Fell on the pirates by the deep,
And hurled them in the gulph of sleep:
These hands won many a torque of gold.
They will not hush, the leaves a-flutter round me, the beech leaves old.

But slowly, as I shouting slew
And trampled in the bubbling mire,
In my most secret spirit grew
A whirling and a wandering fire:
I stood: keen stars above me shone,
Around me shone keen eyes of men:
I laughed aloud and hurried on
By rocky shore and rushy fen;
I laughed because birds fluttered by,
And starlight gleamed, and clouds flew high,
And rushes waved and waters rolled.
They will not hush, the leaves a-flutter round me, the beech leaves old.

And now I wander in the woods
When summer gluts the golden bees,
Or in autumnal solitudes
Arise the leopard-coloured trees;
Or when along the wintry strands
The cormorants shiver on their rocks;
I wander on, and wave my hands,
And sing, and shake my heavy locks.
The grey wolf knows me; by one ear
I lead along the woodland deer;
The hares run by me growing bold.
They will not hush, the leaves a-flutter round me, the beech leaves old.

I came upon a little town,
That slumbered in the harvest moon,
And passed a-tiptoe up and down,
Murmuring, to a fitful tune,
How I have followed, night and day,
A tramping of tremendous feet,
And saw where this old tympan lay,
Deserted on a doorway seat,
And bore it to the woods with me;
Of some unhuman misery

Our married voices wildly trolled.
They will not hush, the leaves a-flutter round
me, the beech leaves old.

I sang how, when day's toil is done,
Orchil shakes out her long dark hair
That hides away the dying sun
And sheds faint odours through the air:
When my hand passed from wire to wire
It quenched, with sound like falling dew,
The whirling and the wandering fire;
But lift a mournful ulalu,
For the kind wires are torn and still,
And I must wander wood and hill
Through summer's heat and winter's cold.
They will not hush, the leaves a-flutter round
me, the beech leaves old.

THE STOLEN CHILD

WHERE dips the rocky highland
Of Sleuth Wood in the lake,
There lies a leafy island
Where flapping herons wake
The drowsy water rats;
There we've hid our faery vats,
Full of berries,
And of reddest stolen cherries.
Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than
you can understand.

Where the wave of moonlight glosses
The dim grey sands with light,

Far off by furthest Rosses
We foot it all the night,
Weaving olden dances,
Mingling hands and mingling glances
Till the moon has taken flight ;
To and fro we leap
And chase the frothy bubbles,
While the world is full of troubles
And is anxious in its sleep.
Come away, O human child !
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than
you can understand.

Where the wandering water gushes
From the hills above Glen-Car,
In pools among the rushes
That scarce could bathe a star,
We seek for slumbering trout
And whispering in their ears
Give them unquiet dreams
Leaning softly out
From ferns that drop their tear
Over the young streams.

Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than
you can underſtand.

Away with us he's going,
The solemn-eyed:
He'll hear no more the lowing
Of the calves on the warm hillside
Or the kettle on the hob
Sing peace into his breaſt,
Or see the brown mice bob
Round and round the oatmeal-cheſt.
For he comes, the human child,
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
From a world more full of weeping than
he can underſtand.

TO AN ISLE IN THE WATER

SHY one, shy one,
Shy one of my heart,
She moves in the firelight
Pensively apart.

She carries in the dishes,
And lays them in a row.
To an isle in the water
With her would I go.

She carries in the candles,
And lights the curtained room,
Shy in the doorway
And shy in the gloom;

And shy as a rabbit,
Helpful and shy.
To an isle in the water
With her would I fly.

DOWN BY THE SALLEY GARDENS

Down by the salley gardens my love and I did meet;
She passed the salley gardens with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree;
But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.

In a field by the river my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white hand.
She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the weirs;
But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears.

THE MEDITATION OF THE OLD FISHERMAN

You waves, though you dance by my feet like children
at play,
Though you glow and you glance, though you purr
and you dart;
In the Junes that were warmer than these are, the
waves were more gay,
When I was a boy with never a crack in my heart.

The herring are not in the tides as they were of old;
My sorrow! for many a creak gave the creel in the cart
That carried the take to Sligo town to be sold,
When I was a boy with never a crack in my heart.

And ah, you proud maiden, you are not so fair when
his oar
Is heard on the water, as they were, the proud and
apart,
Who paced in the eve by the nets on the pebbly shore,
When I was a boy with never a crack in my heart.

THE BALLAD OF FATHER O'HART

Good Father John O'Hart
In penal days rode out
To a shoneen who had free lands
And his own snipe and trout.

In trust took he John's lands;
Sleiveens were all his race;
And he gave them as dowers to his daughters,
And they married beyond their place.

But Father John went up,
And Father John went down;
And he wore small holes in his shoes,
And he wore large holes in his gown.

All loved him, only the shoneen,
Whom the devils have by the hair,
From the wives, and the cats, and the children,
To the birds in the white of the air.

The birds, for he opened their cages
As he went up and down;
And he said with a smile, "Have peace now";
And he went his way with a frown.

But if when anyone died
Came keeners hoarser than rooks,
He bade them give over their keening;
For he was a man of books.

And these were the works of John,
When weeping score by score,
People came into Coloony;
For he'd died at ninety-four.

There was no human keening;
The birds from Knocknarea
And the world round Knocknashee
Came keening in that day.

The young birds and old birds
Came flying, heavy and sad;
Keening in from Tiraragh,
Keening from Ballinafad;

Keening from Inishmurray,
Nor stayed for bite or sup;
This way were all reproved
Who dig old customs up.

THE BALLAD OF MOLL MAGEE

Come round me, little childer ;
There, don't fling stones at me
Because I mutter as I go ;
But pity Moll Magee.

My man was a poor fisher
With shore lines in the say ;
My work was saltin' herrings
The whole of the long day.

And sometimes from the saltin' shed,
I scarce could drag my feet
Under the blessed moonlight,
Along the pebbly street.

I'd always been but weakly,
And my baby was just born ;
A neighbour minded her by day
I minded her till morn.

I lay upon my baby;
Ye little childer dear,
I looked on my cold baby
When the morn grew frosty and clear.

A weary woman sleeps so hard!
My man grew red and pale,
And gave me money, and bade me go
To my own place, Kinsale.

He drove me out and shut the door,
And gave his curse to me;
I went away in silence,
No neighbour could I see.

The windows and the doors were shut,
One star shone faint and green
The little straws were turnin' round
Across the bare boreen.

I went away in silence:
Beyond old Martin's byre
I saw a kindly neighbour
Blowin' her mornin' fire.

She drew from me my ſtory—
My money's all used up,
And ſtill, with pityin', scornin' eye,
She gives me bite and sup.

She says my man will surely come,
And fetch me home agin;
But always, as I'm movin' round,
Without doors or within,

Pilin' the wood or pilin' the turf,
Or goin' to the well,
I'm thinkin' of my baby
And keenin' to mysel'.

And sometimes I am sure she knows
When, openin' wide His door,
God lights the ſtars, His candles,
And looks upon the poor.

So now, ye little childer,
Ye won't fling ſtones at me;
But gather with your shinin' looks
And pity Moll Magee.

THE BALLAD OF THE FOXHUNTER

"Lay me in a cushioned chair;
Carry me, ye four,
With cushions here and cushions there,
To see the world once more.

"To stable and to kennel go;
Bring what's there to bring;
Lead my Lollard to and fro,
Or gently in a ring.

"Put the chair upon the grass:
Bring Rody and his hounds,
That I may contented pass
From these earthly bounds."

His eyelids droop, his head falls low,
His old eyes cloud with dreams;
The sun upon all things that grow
Falls in sleepy streams.

Brown Lollard treads upon the lawn,
And to the armchair goes,
And now the old man's dreams are gone,
He smooths the long brown nose.

And now moves many a pleasant tongue
Upon his waſted hands,
For leading aged hounds and young
The huntsman near him ſtands.

"Huntsman, Rody, blow the horn,
Make the hills reply."
The huntsman loosens on the morn
A gay wandering cry.

Fire is in the old man's eyes,
His fingers move and sway,
And when the wandering music dies
They hear him feebly say,

"Huntsman, Rody, blow the horn,
Make the hills reply."
"I cannot blow upon my horn,
I can but weep and sigh."

Servants round his cushioned place
Are with new sorrow wrung;
Hounds are gazing on his face,
Aged hounds and young.

One blind hound only lies apart
On the sun-smitten grass;
He holds deep commune with his heart:
The moments pass and pass;

The blind hound with a mournful din
Lifts slow his wintry head;
The servants bear the body in;
The hounds wail for the dead.

THE WANDERINGS OF USHEEN
(1889)

" Give me the world if Thou wilt, but grant me an asylum for my affections."—T[illegible].

TO
EDWIN J. ELLIS

BOOK I

S. PATRIC

YOU who are bent, and bald, and blind,
With a heavy heart and a wandering mind,
Have known three centuries, poets sing,
Of dalliance with a demon thing.

USHEEN

Sad to remember, sick with years,
The swift innumerable spears,
The horsemen with their floating hair,
And bowls of barley, honey, and wine,
And feet of maidens dancing in tune,
And the white body that lay by mine;
But the tale, though words be lighter than air,
Must live to be old like the wandering moon.

Caolte, and Conan, and Finn were there,
When we followed a deer with our baying hounds,
With Bran, Sgeolan, and Lomair,
And passing the Firbolgs' burial mounds

Came to the cairn-heaped grassy hill
Where passionate Maive is stony still;
And found on the dove-grey edge of the sea
A pearl-pale, high-born lady, who rode
On a horse with bridle of findrinny;
And like a sunset were her lips,
A stormy sunset on doomed ships;
A citron colour gloomed in her hair,
But down to her feet white vesture flowed,
And with the glimmering crimson glowed
Of many a figured embroidery;
And it was bound with a pearl-pale shell
That wavered like the summer streams,
As her soft bosom rose and fell.

S. Patric

You are still wrecked among heathen dreams.

Usheen

"Why do you wind no horn?" she said.
"And every hero droop his head?
The hornless deer is not more sad
That many a peaceful moment had,

More sleek than any granary mouse,
In his own leafy forest house
Among the waving fields of fern:
The hunting of heroes should be glad.

"O pleasant woman," answered Finn,
"We think on Oscar's pencilled urn,
And on the heroes lying slain,
On Gavra's raven-covered plain;
But where are your noble kith and kin,
And from what country do you ride?"

"My father and my mother are
Aengus and Adene, my own name
Niam, and my country far
Beyond the tumbling of this tide."

"What dream came with you that you came
Through bitter tide on foam-wet feet?
Did your companion wander away
From where the birds of Aengus wing?"

She said, with laughter tender and sweet:
"I have not yet, war-weary king,

Been spoken of with anyone;
Yet now I choose, for these four feet
Ran through the foam and ran to this
That I might have your son to kiss."

"Were there no better than my son
That you through all that foam should run

"I loved no man, though kings besought
Until the Danaan poets brought
Rhyme, that rhymed to Usheen's name,
And now I am dizzy with the thought
Of all that wisdom and the fame
Of battles broken by his hands,
Of ſtories builded by his words
That are like coloured Asian birds
At evening in their rainless lands."

O Patric, by your brazen bell,
There was no limb of mine but fell
Into a desperate gulph of love!
"You only will I wed," I cried,
"And I will make a thousand songs,
And set your name all names above,
And captives bound with leathern thongs

Shall kneel and praise you, one by one,
At evening in my western dun."

" O Usheen, mount by me and ride
To shores by the wash of the tremulous tide,
Where men have heaped no burial mounds,
And the days pass by like a wayward tune,
Where broken faith has never been known,
And the blushes of first love never have flown;
And there I will give you a hundred hounds;
No mightier creatures bay at the moon;
And a hundred robes of murmuring silk,
And a hundred calves and a hundred sheep
Whose long wool whiter than sea froth flows,
And a hundred spears and a hundred bows,
And oil and wine and honey and milk,
And always never-anxious sleep;
While a hundred youths, mighty of limb,
But knowing nor tumult nor hate nor strife,
And a hundred maidens, merry as birds,
Who when they dance to a fitful measure
Have a speed like the speed of the salmon herds,
Shall follow your horn and obey your whim,
And you shall know the Danaan leisure:
And Niam be with you for a wife."

Then she sighed gently, "It grows late,
Music and love and sleep await,
Where I would be when the white moon climbs
The red sun falls and the world grows dim."

And then I mounted and she bound me
With her triumphing arms around me,
And whispering to herself enwound me;
But when the horse had felt my weight,
He shook himself and neighed three times:
Caolte, Conan, and Finn came near,
And wept, and raised their lamenting hands,
And bid me stay, with many a tear;
But we rode out from the human lands.

In what far kingdom do you go,
Ah, Fenians, with the shield and bow?
Or are you phantoms white as snow,
Whose lips had life's most prosperous glow?
O you, with whom in sloping valleys,
Or down the dewy forest alleys,
I chased at morn the flying deer,
With whom I hurled the hurrying spear,
And heard the foemen's bucklers rattle,
And broke the heaving ranks of battle!

And Bran, Sgeolan, and Lomair,
Where are you with your long rough hair?
You go not where the red deer feeds,
Nor tear the foemen from their steeds.

S. Patric

Boast not, nor mourn with drooping head,
Companions long accurst and dead,
And hounds for centuries dust and air.

Usheen

We galloped over the glossy sea:
I know not if days passed or hours,
And Niam sang continually
Danaan songs, and their dewy showers
Of pensive laughter, unhuman sound,
Lulled weariness, and softly round
My human sorrow her white arms wound.

We galloped; now a hornless deer
Passed by us, chased by a phantom hound
All pearly white, save one red ear;
And now a maiden rode like the wind

With an apple of gold in her tossing hand;
And a beautiful young man followed behind
With quenchless gaze and fluttering hair.

"Were these two born in the Danaan land,
Or have they breathed the mortal air?"
"Vex them no longer," Niam said,
And sighing bowed her gentle head,
And sighing laid the pearly tip
Of one long finger on my lip.

But now the moon like a white rose shone
In the pale west, and the sun's rim sank,
And clouds arrayed their rank on rank
About his fading crimson ball:
The floor of Allen's hosting hall
Was not more level than the sea,
As full of loving phantasy,
And with low murmurs we rode on,
Where many a trumpet-twisted shell
That in immortal silence sleeps
Dreaming of her own melting hues,
Her golds, her ambers, and her blues,
Pierced with soft light the shallowing deeps.

But now a wandering land breeze came
And a far sound of feathery quires ;
It seemed to blow from the dying flame,
They seemed to sing in the smouldering fires.
The horse towards the music raced,
Neighing along the lifeless waste ;
Like sooty fingers, many a tree
Rose ever out of the warm sea ;
And they were trembling ceaselessly,
As though they all were beating time,
Upon the centre of the sun,
To that low laughing woodland rhyme,
And, now our wandering hours were done,
We cantered to the shore, and knew
The reason of the trembling trees :
Round every branch the song-birds flew,
Or clung thereon like swarming bees ;
While round the shore a million stood
Like drops of frozen rainbow light,
And pondered in a soft vain mood
Upon their shadows in the tide,
And told the purple deeps their pride,
And murmured snatches of delight ;
And on the shores were many boats
With bending sterns and bending bows.

And carven figures on their prows.
Of bitterns, and fish-eating stoats,
And swans with their exultant throats:
And where the wood and waters meet
We tied the horse in a leafy clump,
And Niam blew three merry notes
Out of a little silver trump;
And then an answering whispering flew
Over the bare and woody land,
A whisper of impetuous feet,
And ever nearer, nearer grew;
And from the woods rushed out a band
Of men and maidens, hand in hand,
And singing, singing altogether;
Their brows were white as fragrant milk,
Their cloaks made out of yellow silk,
And trimmed with many a crimson feather;
And when they saw the cloak I wore
Was dim with mire of a mortal shore,
They fingered it and gazed on me
And laughed like murmurs of the sea;
But Niam with a swift distress
Bid them away and hold their peace;
And when they heard her voice they ran
And knelt them, every maid and man

And kissed, as they would never cease,
Her pearl-pale hand and the hem of her dress.
She bade them bring us to the hall
Where Aengus dreams, from sun to sun,
A Druid dream of the end of days
When the stars are to wane and the world be done

They led us by long and shadowy ways
Where drops of dew in myriads fall,
And tangled creepers every hour
Blossom in some new crimson flower,
And once a sudden laughter sprang
From all their lips, and once they sang
Together, while the dark woods rang,
And made in all their distant parts,
With boom of bees in honey marts,
A rumour of delighted hearts.
And once a maiden by my side
Gave me a harp, and bade me sing,
And touch the laughing silver string;
But when I sang of human joy
A sorrow wrapped each merry face,
And, Patrick! by your beard, they wept,
Until one came, a tearful boy;
"A sadder creature never stept

Than this strange human bard," he cried;
And caught the silver harp away,
And, weeping over the white strings, hurled
It down in a leaf-hid, hollow place
That kept dim waters from the sky;
And each one said, with a long, long sigh,
"O saddest harp in all the world,
Sleep there till the moon and the stars die!"

And now still sad we came to where
A beautiful young man dreamed within
A house of wattles, clay, and skin;
One hand upheld his beardless chin;
And one a sceptre flashing out
Wild flames of red and gold and blue,
Like to a merry wandering rout
Of dancers leaping in the air;
And men and maidens knelt them there
And showed their eyes with teardrops dim,
And with low murmurs prayed to him,
And kissed the sceptre with red lips,
And touched it with their finger-tips.

He held that flashing sceptre up.
"Joy drowns the twilight in the dew,

And fills with stars night's purple cup,
And wakes the sluggard seeds of corn,
And stirs the young kid's budding horn
And makes the infant ferns unwrap,
And for the peewit paints his cap,
And rolls along the unwieldy sun,
And makes the little planets run:
And if joy were not on the earth,
There were an end of change and birth,
And earth and heaven and hell would die,
And in some gloomy barrow lie
Folded like a frozen fly;
Then mock at Death and Time with glances
And wavering arms and wandering dances.

"Men's hearts of old were drops of flame
That from the saffron morning came,
Or drops of silver joy that fell
Out of the moon's pale twisted shell;
But now hearts cry that hearts are slaves,
And toss and turn in narrow caves;
But here there is nor law nor rule,
Nor have hands held a weary tool;
And here there is nor Change nor Death,
But only kind and merry breath,

For joy is God and God is joy."
With one long glance on maid and boy
And the pale blossom of the moon,
He fell into a Druid swoon.

And in a wild and sudden dance
We mocked at Time and Fate and Chance
And swept out of the wattled hall
And came to where the dewdrops fall
Among the foamdrops of the sea,
And there we hushed the revelry;
And, gathering on our brows a frown,
Bent all our swaying bodies down,
And to the waves that glimmer by
That sloping green De Danaan sod
Sang "God is joy and joy is God.
And things that have grown sad are wicked,
And things that fear the dawn of the morrow
Or the grey wandering osprey Sorrow."

We danced to where in the winding thicket
The damask roses, bloom on bloom,
Like crimson meteors hang in the gloom,
And bending over them softly said,

Bending over them in the dance
With a swift and friendly glance
From dewy eyes: " Upon the dead
Fall the leaves of other roses,
On the dead dim earth encloses:
But never, never on our graves,
Heaped beside the glimmering waves,
Shall fall the leaves of damask roses.
For neither Death nor Change comes near us,
And all listless hours fear us,
And we fear no dawning morrow,
Nor the grey wandering osprey Sorrow."

The dance wound through the windless woods:
The ever-summered solitudes;
Until the tossing arms grew still
Upon the woody central hill;
And, gathered in a panting band,
We flung on high each waving hand,
And sang unto the starry broods
In our raised eyes there flashed a glow
Of milky brightness to and fro
As thus our song arose: " You stars,
Across your wandering ruby cars

Shake the loose reins : you slaves of God,
He rules you with an iron rod,
He holds you with an iron bond,
Each one woven to the other,
Each one woven to his brother
Like bubbles in a frozen pond ;
But we in a lonely land abide
Unchainable as the dim tide,
With hearts that know nor law nor rule,
And hands that hold no wearisome tool,
Folded in love that fears no morrow,
Nor the grey wandering osprey Sorrow."

O Patric ! for a hundred years
I chased upon that woody shore
The deer, the badger, and the boar.
O Patric ! for a hundred years
At evening on the glimmering sands,
Beside the piled-up hunting spears,
These now outworn and withered hands
Wrestled among the island bands.
O Patric ! for a hundred years
We went a-fishing in long boats
With bending sterns and bending bows,
And carven figures on their prows

Of bitterns and fish-eating stoats.
O Patric! for a hundred years
The gentle Niam was my wife;
But now two things devour my life;
The things that most of all I hate;
Fasting and prayers.

S. PATRIC

Tell on.

USHEEN

Yes, yes.

For these were ancient Usheen's fate,
Loosed long ago from heaven's gate,
For his last days to lie in wait.

When one day by the tide I stood,
I found in that forgetfulness
Of dreamy foam a staff of wood
From some dead warrior's broken lance:
I turned it in my hands; the stains
Of war were on it, and I wept,
Remembering how the Fenians stept
Along the blood-bedabbled plains,
Equal to good or grievous chance:

Thereon young Niam softly came
And caught my hands, but spake no word
Save only many times my name,
In murmurs, like a frighted bird.
We passed by woods, and lawns of clover,
And found the horse and bridled him,
For we knew well the old was over.
I heard one say, "His eyes grow dim
With all the ancient sorrow of men";
And wrapped in dreams rode out again
With hoofs of the pale findrinny
Over the glimmering purple sea:
Under the golden evening light.
The immortals moved among the fountains
By rivers and the woods' old night;
Some danced like shadows on the mountains,
Some wandered ever hand in hand;
Or sat in dreams on the pale strand,
Each forehead like an obscure star
Bent down above each hooked knee,
And sang, and with a dreamy gaze
Watched where the sun in a saffron blaze
Was slumbering half in the sea ways,
And, as they sang, the painted birds
Kept time with their bright wings and feet;

Like drops of honey came their words,
But fainter than a young lamb's bleat.

"An old man stirs the fire to blaze,
In the house of a child, of a friend, of a brother;
He has over-lingered his welcome; the days,
Grown desolate, whisper and sigh to each other;
He hears the storm in the chimney above,
And bends to the fire and shakes with the cold,
While his heart still dreams of battle and love,
And the cry of the hounds on the hills of old.

"But we are apart in the grassy places,
Where care cannot trouble the least of our days,
Or the softness of youth be gone from our faces,
Or love's first tenderness die in our gaze.
The hare grows old as she plays in the sun
And gazes around her with eyes of brightness;
Before the swift things that she dreamed of were done
She limps along in an aged whiteness;
A storm of birds in the Asian trees
Like tulips in the air a-winging,
And the gentle waves of the summer seas,
That raise their heads and wander singing,

Must murmur at last 'Unjust, unjust';
And 'My speed is a weariness,' falters the mouse,
And the kingfisher turns to a ball of dust,
And the roof falls in of his tunnelled house,
But the love-dew dims our eyes till the day
When God shall come from the sea with a sigh
And bid the stars drop down from the sky,
And the moon like a pale rose wither away."

BOOK II

Now, man of croziers, shadows called our names
And then away, away, like whirling flames;
And now fled by, mist-covered, without sound,
The youth and lady and the deer and hound;
"Gaze no more on the phantoms," Niam said,
And kissed my eyes, and, swaying her bright head
And her bright body, sang of faery and man
Before God was or my old line began;
Wars shadowy, vast, exultant; faeries of old
Who wedded men with rings of Druid gold;
And how those lovers never turn their eyes
Upon the life that fades and flickers and dies,
But love and kiss on dim shores far away
Rolled round with music of the sighing spray:
But sang no more, as when, like a brown bee
That has drunk full, she crossed the misty sea
With me in her white arms a hundred years
Before this day; for now the fall of tears
Troubled her song.

I do not know if days
Or hours passed by, yet hold the morning rays
Shone many times among the glimmering flowers
Woven into her hair. before dark towers

Rose in the darkness, and the white surf gleamed
About them; and the horse of faery screamed
And shivered, knowing the Isle of Many Fears,
Nor ceased until white Niam stroked his ears
And named him by sweet names.
A foaming tide
Whitened afar with surge, fan-formed and wide,
Burst from a great door marred by many a blow
From mace and sword and pole-axe, long ago
When gods and giants warred. We rode between
The seaweed-covered pillars; and the green
And surging phosphorus alone gave light
On our dark pathway, till a countless flight
Of moonlit steps glimmered; and left and right
Dark statues glimmered over the pale tide
Upon dark thrones. Between the lids of one
The imaged meteors had flashed and run
And had disported in the stilly jet,
And the fixed stars had dawned and shone and set,
Since God made Time and Death and Sleep: the other
Stretched his long arm to where, a misty smother,
The stream churned, churned, and churned—his lips apart,
As though he told his never-slumbering heart

Of every foamdrop on its misty way.
Tying the horse to his vast foot that lay
Half in the unvesselled sea, we climbed the stairs
And climbed so long, I thought the last steps were
Hung from the morning star; when these mild words
Fanned the delighted air like wings of birds:
"My brothers spring out of their beds at morn,
A-murmur like young partridge: with loud horn
They chase the noontide deer;
And when the dew-drowned stars hang in the air
Look to long fishing-lines, or point and pare
An ashen hunting spear.

"O sigh, O fluttering sigh, be kind to me;
Flutter along the froth lips of the sea,
And shores, the froth lips wet:
And stay a little while, and bid them weep:
Ah, touch their blue-veined eyelids if they sleep,
And shake their coverlet.

"When you have told how I weep endlessly,
Flutter along the froth lips of the sea
And home to me again,
And in the shadow of my hair lie hid,

And tell me that you found a man unbid,
The saddest of all men."

A lady with soft eyes like funeral tapers,
And face that seemed wrought out of moonlit vapours,
And a sad mouth, that fear made tremulous
As any ruddy moth, looked down on us;
And she with a wave-rusted chain was tied
To two old eagles, full of ancient pride,
That with dim eyeballs stood on either side.
Few feathers were on their dishevelled wings,
For their dim minds were with the ancient things

"I bring deliverance," pearl-pale Niam said.

"Neither the living, nor the unlabouring dead,
Nor the high gods who never lived, may fight
My enemy and hope; demons for fright
Jabber and scream about him in the night;
For he is strong and crafty as the seas
That sprang under the Seven Hazel Trees,
And I must needs endure and hate and weep.
Until the gods and demons drop asleep,
Hearing Aed touch the mournful strings of gold"

"Is he so dreadful?

"Be not over-bold,
But, fly while ſtill you may."

And thereon I:
"This demon shall be battered till he die,
And his loose bulk be thrown in the loud tide.'

"Flee from him," pearl-pale Niam weeping cried,
"For all men flee the demons"; but moved not
My angry king-remembering soul one jot.
There was no mightier soul of Heber's line;
Now it is old and mouse-like. For a sign
I burſt the chain: ſtill earless, nerveless, blind,
Wrapped in the things of the unhuman mind,
In some dim memory or ancient mood
Still earless, nerveless, blind, the eagles ſtood.
And then we climbed the ſtair to a high door;
A hundred horsemen on the basalt floor
Beneath had paced content: we held our way
And ſtood within: clothed in a miſty ray
I saw a foam-white seagull drift and float
Under the roof, and with a ſtraining throat

Shouted, and hailed him : he hung there a star.
For no man's cry shall ever mount so far ;
Not even your God could have thrown down that hall ;
Stabling His unloosed lightnings in their stall,
He had sat down and sighed with cumbered heart,
As though His hour were come.

We sought the part
That was most distant from the door ; green slime
Made the way slippery, and time on time
Showed prints of sea-born scales, while down through it
The captive's journeys to and fro were writ
Like a small river, and where feet touched, came
A momentary gleam of phosphorus flame.
Under the deepest shadows of the hall
That maiden found a ring hung on the wall,
And in the ring a torch, and with its flare
Making a world about her in the air,
Passed under the dim doorway, out of sight
And came again, holding a second light
Burning between her fingers, and in mine
Laid it and sighed : I held a sword whose shine

No centuries could dim, and a word ran
Thereon in Ogham letters, "Mananan";
That sea-god's name, who in a deep content
Sprang dripping, and, with captive demons sent
Out of the seven-fold seas, built the dark hall
Rooted in foam and clouds, and cried to all
The mightier maſters of a mightier race;
And at his cry there came no milk-pale face
Under a crown of thorns and dark with blood,
But only exultant faces.

Niam ſtood
With bowed head, trembling when the white blade
shone,
But she whose hours of tenderness were gone
Had neither hope nor fear. I bade them hide
Under the shadows till the tumults died
Of the loud crashing and earth-shaking fight,
Leſt they should look upon some dreadful sight,
And thrust the torch between the slimy flags.
A dome made out of endless carven jags,
Where shadowy face flowed into shadowy face,
Looked down on me; and in the self-same place
I waited hour by hour, and the high dome,
Windowless, pillarless, multitudinous home

Of faces, waited; and the leisured gaze
Was loaded with the memory of days
Buried and mighty. When through the great door
The dawn came in, and glimmered on the floor
With a pale light, I journeyed round the hall
And found a door deep sunken in the wall,
The least of doors; beyond on a dim plain
A little runnel made a bubbling strain,
And on the runnel's stony and bare edge
A dusky demon dry as a withered sedge
Swayed, crooning to himself an unknown tongue:
In a sad revelry he sang and swung
Bacchant and mournful, passing to and fro
His hand along the runnel's side, as though
The flowers still grew there: far on the sea's waste
Shaking and waving, vapour vapour chased,
While high frail cloudlets, fed with a green light,
Like drifts of leaves, immovable and bright,
Hung in the passionate dawn. He slowly turned:
A demon's leisure: eyes, first white, now burned
Like wings of kingfishers; and he arose
Barking. We trampled up and down with blows
Of sword and brazen battle-axe, while day
Gave to high noon and noon to night gave way
And when he knew the sword of Mananan

Amid the shades of night, he changed and ran
Through many shapes; I lunged at the smooth throat
Of a great eel; it changed, and I but smote
A fir-tree roaring in its leafless top:
And thereupon I drew the livid chop
Of a drowned dripping body to my breast;
Horror from horror grew; but when the west
Had surged up in a plumy fire, I drave
Through heart and spine; and cast him in the wave
Lest Niam shudder.

Full of hope and dread
Those two came carrying wine and meat and bread,
And healed my wounds with unguents out of flowers
That feed white moths by some De Danaan shrine:
Then in that hall, lit by the dim sea shine,
We lay on skins of otters, and drank wine,
Brewed by the sea-gods, from huge cups that lay
Upon the lips of sea-gods in their day;
And then on heaped-up skins of otters slept.
And when the sun once more in saffron stept,
Rolling his flagrant wheel out of the deep,
We sang the loves and angers without sleep,
And all the exultant labours of the strong.

But now the lying clerics murder song
With barren words and flatteries of the weak.
In what land do the powerless turn the beak
Of ravening Sorrow, or the hand of Wrath?
For all your croziers, they have left the path
And wander in the storms and clinging snows,
Hopeless for ever: ancient Usheen knows,
For he is weak and poor and blind, and lies
On the anvil of the world.

S. PATRIC

Be still: the skies
Are choked with thunder, lightning, and fierce wind,
For God has heard, and speaks His angry mind;
Go cast your body on the stones and pray,
For He has wrought midnight and dawn and day.

USHEEN

Saint, do you weep? I hear amid the thunder
The Fenian horses; armour torn asunder;
Laughter and cries. The armies clash and shock;
And now the daylight-darkening ravens flock.
Cease, cease, oh mournful, laughing Fenian horn!

We feasted for three days. On the fourth morn
I found, dropping sea foam on the wide stair,
And hung with slime, and whispering in his hair,
That demon dull and unsubduable;
And once more to a day-long battle fell,
And at the sundown threw him in the surge,
To lie until the fourth morn saw emerge
His new healed shape; and for a hundred years
So warred, so feasted, with nor dreams nor fears,
Nor languor nor fatigue; an endless feast,
An endless war.

The hundred years had ceased;
I stood upon the stair; the surges bore
A beech bough to me, and my heart grew sore,
Remembering how I had stood by white-haired Finn
Under a beech at Allen and heard the thin
Outcry of bats.

And then young Niam came
Holding that horse, and sadly called my name.
I mounted, and we passed over the lone
And drifting greyness, while this monotone,
Surly and distant, mixed inseparably
Into the clangour of the wind and sea.

"I hear my soul drop down into decay,
And Mananan's dark tower, stone after stone,
Gather sea slime and fall the seaward way,
And the moon goad the waters night and day,
That all be overthrown.

"But till the moon has taken all, I wage
War on the mightiest men under the skies,
And they have fallen or fled, age after age.
Light is man's love, and lighter is man's rage;
His purpose drifts and dies."

And then lost Niam murmured, "Love, we go
To the Island of Forgetfulness, for lo!
The Islands of Dancing and of Victories
Are empty of all power."

"And which of these
Is the Island of Content?"

"None know," she said;
And on my bosom laid her weeping head.

BOOK III

FLED foam underneath us, and round us, a wandering
and milky smoke,
High as the saddle girth, covering away from our
glances the tide;
And those that fled, and that followed, from the foam-
pale distance broke;
The immortal desire of immortals we saw in their
faces, and sighed.

I mused on the chase with the Fenians, and Bran,
Sgeolan, Lomair,
And never a song sang Niam, and over my finger-tips
Came now the sliding of tears and sweeping of mist-
cold hair,
And now the warmth of sighs, and after the quiver
of lips.

Were we days long or hours long in riding, when
rolled in a grisly peace,
An isle lay level before us, with dripping hazel and
oak?

And we ﬅood on a sea's edge we saw not; for whiter than new-washed fleece
Fled foam underneath us, and round us, a wandering and milky smoke.

And we rode on the plains of the sea's edge; the sea's edge barren and grey,
Grey sand on the green of the grasses and over the dripping trees,
Dripping and doubling landward, as though they would haﬅen away
Like an army of old men longing for reﬅ from the moan of the seas.

But the trees grew taller and closer, immense in their wrinkling bark;
Dropping; a murmurous dropping; old silence and that one sound;
For no live creatures lived there, no weasels moved in the dark:
Long sighs arose in our spirits, beneath us bubbled the ground.

And the ears of the horse went sinking away in the hollow night,

For, as drift from a sailor slow drowning the gleams
of the world and the sun,
Ceased on our hands and our faces, on hazel and
oak leaf, the light,
And the ſtars were blotted above us, and the whole of
the world was one.

Till the horse gave a whinny; for, cumbrous with
ſtems of the hazel and oak,
A valley flowed down from his hoofs, and there in the
long grass lay,
Under the ſtarlight and shadow, a monſtrous slumbering
folk,
Their naked and gleaming bodies poured out and heaped
in the way.

And by them were arrow and war-axe, arrow and
shield and blade;
And dew-blanched horns, in whose hollow a child of
three years old
Could sleep on a couch of rushes, and all inwrought
and inlaid,
And more comely than man can make them with
bronze and silver and gold.

And each of the huge white creatures was huger than
fourscore men;
The tops of their ears were feathered, their hands were
the claws of birds,
And, shaking the plumes of the grasses and the leaves
of the mural glen,
The breathing came from those bodies, long-warless,
grown whiter than curds.

The wood was so spacious above them, that He who
has ſtars for His flocks
Could fondle the leaves with His fingers, nor go from
His dew-cumbered skies;
So long were they sleeping, the owls had builded
their neſts in their locks,
Filling the fibrous dimness with long generations of
eyes.

And over the limbs and the valley the slow owls
wandered and came,
Now in a place of ſtar-fire, and now in a shadow place
wide:
And the chief of the huge white creatures, his knees
in the soft ſtar-flame,
Lay loose in a place of shadow: we drew the reins
by his side.

Golden the nails of his bird-claws, flung loosely along
the dim ground;
In one was a branch soft-shining with bells more many
than sighs
In midst of an old man's bosom; owls ruffling and
pacing around,
Sidled their bodies against him, filling the shade with
their eyes.

And my gaze was thronged with the sleepers; no,
not since the world began,
In realms where the handsome were many, nor in
glamours by demons flung,
Have faces alive with such beauty been known to
the salt eye of man,
Yet weary with passions that faded when the seven-
fold seas were young.

And I gazed on the bell-branch, sleep's forebear, far
sung by the Sennachies.
I saw how those slumberers, grown weary, there
camping in grasses deep,
Of wars with the wide world and pacing the shores
of the wandering seas,

Laid hands on the bell-branch and swayed it, and
fed of unhuman sleep.

Snatching the horn of Niam, I blew a long lingering
note.
Came sound from those monstrous sleepers, a sound
like the stirring of flies.
He, shaking the fold of his lips, and heaving the pillar
of his throat,
Watched me with mournful wonder out of the wells
of his eyes.

I cried, " Come out of the shadow, king of the nails
of gold!
And tell of your goodly household and the goodly
works of your hands,
That we may muse in the starlight and talk of the
battles of old;
Your questioner, Usheen, is worthy, he comes from
the Fenian lands."

Half open his eyes were, and held me, dull with the
smoke of their dreams;
His lips moved slowly in answer, no answer out of
them came;

Then he swayed in his fingers the bell-branch, slow
dropping a sound in faint streams
Softer than snow-flakes in April and piercing the
marrow like flame.

Wrapt in the wave of that music, with weariness more
than of earth,
The moil of my centuries filled me; and gone like a
sea-covered stone
Were the memories of the whole of my sorrow and
the memories of the whole of my mirth,
And a softness came from the starlight and filled me
full to the bone.

In the roots of the grasses, the sorrels, I laid my body
as low;
And the pearl-pale Niam lay by me, her brow on the
midst of my breast;
And the horse was gone in the distance, and years after
years 'gan flow;
Square leaves of the ivy moved over us, binding us
down to our rest.

And, man of the many white croziers, a century there
I forgot;

How the fetlocks drip blood in the battle, when the
fallen on fallen lie rolled;
How the falconer follows the falcon in the weeds of
the heron's plot,
And the names of the demons whose hammers made
armour for Conhor of old.

And, man of the many white croziers, a century there
I forgot;
That the spear-shaft is made out of ashwood, the shield
out of ozier and hide;
How the hammers spring on the anvil, on the spear-
head's burning spot,
How the slow, blue-eyed oxen of Fin low sadly at
evening tide.

But in dreams, mild man of the croziers, driving the
dust with their throngs,
Moved round me, of seamen or landsmen, all who are
winter tales;
Came by me the kings of the Red Branch, with roaring
of laughter and songs,
Or moved as they moved once, love-making or piercing
the tempest with sails.

Came Blanid, Mac Nessa, tall Fergus who feastward
of old time slunk,
Cook Barach, the traitor; and warward, the spittle
on his beard never dry,
Dark Balor, as old as a forest, car borne, his mighty
head sunk
Helpless, men lifting the lids of his weary and death-
making eye.

And by me, in soft red raiment, the Fenians moved
in loud streams,
And Grania, walking and smiling, sewed with her
needle of bone.
So lived I and lived not, so wrought I and wrought
not, with creatures of dreams,
In a long iron sleep, as a fish in the water goes dumb
as a stone.

At times our slumber was lightened. When the sun
was on silver or gold;
When brushed with the wings of the owls, in the
dimness they love going by;
When a glow-worm was green on a grass leaf, lured
from his lair in the mould;

Half-wakening, we lifted our eyelids, and gazed on
the grass with a sigh.

So watched I when, man of the croziers, at the heel
of a century fell,
Weak, in the midst of the meadow, from his miles
in the midst of the air,
A starling like them that forgathered 'neath a moon
waking white as a shell
When the Fenians made foray at morning with Bran,
Sgeolan, Lomair.

I awoke: the strange horse without summons out of
the distance ran,
Thrusting his nose to my shoulder; he knew in his
bosom deep
That once more moved in my bosom the ancient
sadness of man,
And that I would leave the immortals, their dimness,
their dews dropping sleep.

O had you seen beautiful Niam grow white as the
waters are white,
Lord of the croziers, you even had lifted your hands
and wept:

But, the bird in my fingers, I mounted, remembering
alone that delight
Of twilight and slumber were gone, and that hoofs
impatiently stept.

I cried, "O Niam! O white one! if only a twelve-
houred day,
I must gaze on the beard of Finn, and move where the
old men and young
In the Fenians' dwellings of wattle lean on the chess-
boards and play,
Ah, sweet to me now were even bald Conan's slanderous
tongue!

"Like me were some galley forsaken far off in Meridian
isle.
Remembering its long oared companions, sails turning
to thread-bare rags;
No more to crawl on the seas with long oars mile after
mile,
But to be amid shooting of flies and flowering of rushes
and flags."

Their motionless eyeballs of spirits grown mild with
mysterious thought

Watched her those seamless faces from the valley's glimmering girth;
As she murmured, "Oh wandering Usheen, the strength of the bell-branch is naught,
For there moves alive in your fingers the fluttering sadness of earth.

"Then go through the lands in the saddle and see what the mortals do,
And softly come to your Niam over the tops of the tide;
But weep for your Niam, O Usheen, weep; for if only your shoe
Brush lightly as haymouse earth's pebbles, you will come no more to my side.

"O flaming lion of the world, O when will you turn to your rest?"
I saw from a distant saddle; from the earth she made her moan;
"I would die like a small withered leaf in the autumn, for breast unto breast
We shall mingle no more, nor our gazes empty their sweetness lone.

"In the isles of the farthest seas where only the spirits
come,
Were the winds less soft than the breath of a pigeon
who sleeps on her nest,
Nor lost in the star-fires and odours the sound of the
sea's vague drum?
O flaming lion of the world, O when will you turn to
your rest?"

The wailing grew distant; I rode by the woods of the
wrinkling bark,
Where ever is murmurous dropping, old silence and
that one sound;
For no live creatures live there, no weasels move in the
dark;
In a reverie forgetful of all things, over the bubbling
ground.

And I rode by the plains of the sea's edge, where all
is barren and grey,
Grey sands on the green of the grasses and over the
dripping trees,
Dripping and doubling landward, as though they
would hasten away,

Like an army of old men longing for reſt from the
moan of the seas.

And the winds made the sands on the sea's edge turning
and turning go,
As my mind made the names of the Fenians. Far from
the hazel and oak,
I rode away on the surges, where, high as the saddle
bow,
Fled foam underneath me, and round me, a wandering
and milky smoke.

Long fled the foam-flakes around me, the winds fled
out of the vaſt,
Snatching the bird in secret; nor knew I, embosomed
apart,
When they froze the cloth on my body like armour
riveted faſt,
For Remembrance, lifting her leanness, keened in the
gates of my heart.

'Till fattening the winds of the morning, an odour of
new-mown hay
Came and my forehead fell low, and my tears like
berries fell down;

Later a sound came, half loſt in the sound of a shore
far away,
From the great grass-barnacle calling, and later the
shore-weeds brown.

If I were as I once was, the ſtrong hoofs crushing the
sand and the shells,
Coming out of the sea as the dawn comes, a chaunt of
love on my lips,
Not coughing, my head on my knees, and praying, and
wroth with the bells,
I would leave no saint's head on his body from Rachlin
to Bera of ships.

Making way from the kindling surges, I rode on a
bridle-path
Much wondering to see upon all hands, of wattles and
woodwork made,
Your bell-mounted churches, and guardless the sacred
cairn and the rath,
And a small and a feeble populace ſtooping with mattock
and spade.

Or weeding or ploughing with faces a-shining with
much-toil wet;

While in this place and that place, with bodies un-
glorious their chieftains ſtood,
Awaiting in patience the ſtraw-death, croziered one,
caught in your net:
Went the laughter of scorn from my mouth like the
roaring of wind in a wood.

And because I went by them so huge and so speedy
with eyes so bright,
Came after the hard gaze of youth, or an old man
lifted his head:
And I rode and I rode, and I cried out, "The Fenians
hunt wolves in the night,
So sleep thee by daytime." A voice cried, "The
Fenians a long time are dead."

A whitebeard ſtood hushed on the pathway, the flesh
of his face as dried grass,
And in folds round his eyes and his mouth, he sad as
a child without milk;
And the dreams of the islands were gone, and I knew
how men sorrow and pass,
And their hound, and their horse, and their love, and
their eyes that glimmer like silk.

And wrapping my face in my hair, I murmured, "In
old age they ceased";
And my tears were larger than berries, and I murmured,
"Where white clouds lie spread
On Crevroe or broad Knockfefin, with many of old
they feast
On the floors of the gods." He cried, "No, the gods a
long time are dead."

And lonely and longing for Niam, I shivered and turned
me about,
The heart in me longing to leap like a grasshopper
into her heart;
I turned and rode to the westward, and followed the
sea's old shout
Till I saw where Maive lies sleeping till starlight and
midnight part.

And there, at the foot of the mountain, two
carried a sack full of sand,
They bore it with staggering and sweating, but fell
with their burden at length.
Leaning down from the gem-studded saddle, I flung
it five yards with my hand,

With a sob for men waxing so weakly, a sob for the
Fenian's old strength.

The rest you have heard of, O croziered man; how
when divided the girth,
I fell on the path, and the horse went away like a
summer fly;
And my years three hundred fell on me, and I rose and
walked on the earth,
A creeping old man, full of sleep, with the spittle on
his beard never dry.

How the men of the sand-sack showed me a church
with its belfry in air;
Sorry place, where for swing of the war-axe in my
dim eyes the crozier gleams;
What place have Caolte and Conan, and Bran, Sgeolan,
Lomair?
Speak, you too are old with your memories, an old man
surrounded with dreams.

S. Patric

Where the flesh of the footsole clingeth on the burning
stones is their place;

Where the demons whip them with wires on the burning
stones of wide hell,
Watching the blessed ones move far off, and the smile
on God's face,
Between them a gateway of brass, and the howl of the
angels who fell.

USHEEN

Put the staff in my hands; for I go to the Fenians, O
cleric, to chaunt
The war-songs that roused them of old; they will
rise, making clouds with their breath
Innumerable, singing, exultant; the clay underneath
them shall pant,
And demons be broken in pieces, and trampled beneath
them in death.

And demons afraid in their darkness; deep horror
of eyes and of wings,
Afraid their ears on the earth laid, shall listen and rise
up and weep;
Hearing the shaking of shields and the quiver of stretched
bowstrings,
Hearing Hell loud with a murmur, as shouting and
mocking we sweep.

We will tear out the flaming stones, and batter the gateway of brass
And enter, and none sayeth "No" when there enters the strongly armed guest;
Make clean as a broom cleans, and march on as oxen move over young grass;
Then feast, making converse of wars, and of old wounds, and turn to our rest.

S. Patric

On the flaming stones, without refuge, the limbs of the Fenians are tost;
None war on the masters of Hell, who could break up the world in their rage;
Kneel, Usheen, wear out the flags and pray for your soul that is lost
Through the demon love of its youth and its godless and passionate age.

Usheen

Ah, me! to be shaken with coughing and broken with old age and pain,
Without laughter, a show unto children, alone with remembrance and fear;

All emptied of purple hours as a beggar's cloak in the rain,
As a hay-cock out on the flood, or a wolf sucked under a weir.

It were sad to gaze on the blessed and no man I loved of old there;
I throw down the chain of small stones! when life in my body has ceased,
I will go to Caolte, and Conan, and Bran, Sgeolan, Lomair,
And dwell in the house of the Fenians, be they in flames or at feast.

NOTES

The Pronunciation of the Irish Names.—When I wrote the greater number of these poems I had hardly considered the question seriously. I copied at times somebody's perhaps fanciful phonetic spelling, and at times the ancient spelling as I found it in some literal translation, pronouncing the words always as they were spelt. I can only affirm that I did not even in my youth treat Irish names as badly as the mediaeval writers of the stories of King Arthur treated their Welsh names.

The Ballad of Father O'Hart.—This ballad is founded on the story of a certain Father O'Hart, priest of Coloony, Sligo, in the eighteenth century, as told by the man who was priest of Coloony in his *History of Ballisodare and Kilvarnet.* The robbery of the lands of Father O'Hart was a kind of robbery which occurred but rarely during the penal laws. Catholics, forbidden to own landed property, evaded the law by giving a Protestant nominal possession of their estates. There are instances on record in which poor men were nominal owners of immense estates.

The Ballad of the Foxhunter.—Founded on an incident, probably itself a Tipperary tradition, in Kickham's *Knock-agow.*

The Countess Cathleen.—I found the story of the Countess Cathleen in what professed to be a collection of Irish folk-lore in an Irish newspaper. I wrote to the compiler, asking about its source, but got no answer, but have since learned that it was translated from *Les Matinées de Timothé Trimm* a good many years ago, and has been drifting about the Irish

press ever since. Léo Lespès gives it as an Irish story, and though the editor of *Folklore* has kindly advertised for information, the only Christian variant I know of is a Donegal tale, given by Mr. Larminie in his *West Irish Folk Tales and Romances*, of a woman who goes to hell for ten years to save her husband, and stays there another ten, having been granted permission to carry away as many souls as could cling to her skirt. Léo Lespès may have added a few details, but I have no doubt of the essential antiquity of what seems to me the most impressive form of one of the supreme parables of the world. The parable came to the Greeks in the sacrifice of Alcestis, but her sacrifice was less overwhelming, less apparently irremediable Léo Lespès tells the story as follows :—

Ce que je vais vous dire est un récit du carême Irlandais. Le boiteux, l'aveugle, le paralytique des rues de Dublin ou de Limerick, vous le diraient mieux que moi, cher lecteur, si vous alliez le leur demander, un sixpense d'argent à la main.—Il n'est pas une jeune fille catholique à laquelle on ne l'ait appris pendant les jours de préparation à la communion sainte, pas un berger des bords de la Blackwater qui ne le puisse redire à la veillée.

Il y a bien longtemps qu'il apparut tout-à-coup dans la vieille Irlande deux marchands inconnus dont personne n'avait ouï parler, et qui parlaient néanmoins avec la plus grande perfection la langue du pays. Leurs cheveux étaient noirs et ferrés avec de l'or et leurs robes d'une grande magnificence.

Tous deux semblaient avoir le même âge ; ils paraissaient être des hommes de cinquante ans, car leur barbe grisonnait un peu.

Or, à cette époque, comme aujourd'hui, l'Irlande était pauvre, car le soleil avait été rare, et des récoltes presque nulles. Les indigents ne savaient à quel sainte se vouer, et la misère devenait de plus en plus terrible.

Dans l'hôtellerie où descendirent les marchands fastueux on

chercha à pénétrer leurs desseins : mais ce fut en vain, ils demeurèrent silencieux et discrets.

Et pendant qu'ils demeurèrent dans l'hôtellerie, ils ne cessèrent de compter et de recompter des sacs de pièces d'or, dont la vive clarté s'apercevait à travers les vitres du logis.

Gentlemen, leur dit l'hôtesse un jour, d'où vient que vous êtes si opulents, et que, venus pour secourir la misère publique, vous ne fassiez pas de bonnes œuvres ?

— Belle hôtesse, répondit l'un d'eux, nous n'avons pas voulu aller au-devant d'infortunes honorables, dans la crainte d'être trompés par des misères fictives : que la douleur frappe à la porte, nous ouvrirons.

Le lendemain, quand on sut qu'il existait deux opulents étrangers prêts à prodiguer l'or, la foule assiégea leur logis ; mais les figures des gens qui en sortaient étaient bien diverses. Les uns avaient la fierté dans le regard, les autres portaient la honte au front. Les deux trafiquants achetaient des âmes pour le démon. L'âme d'un vieillard valait vingt pièces d'or, pas un penny de plus ; car Satan avait eu le temps d'y former hypothèque. L'âme d'une épose en valait cinquante quand elle était jolie, ou cent quand elle était laide. L'âme d'une jeune fille se payait des prix fous : les fleurs les plus belles et les plus pures sont les plus chères.

Pendant ce temps, il existait dans la ville un ange de beauté, la comtesse Ketty O'Connor. Elle était l'idole du peuple, et la providence des indigents. Dès qu'elle eut appris que des mécréants profitaient de la misère publique pour dérober des cœurs à Dieu, elle fit appeler son majordome.

— Master Patrick, lui dit-elle, combien ai-je de pièces d'or dans mon coffre ?

— Cent mille.

— Combien de bijoux ?

— Pour autant d'argent.

— Combien de châteux, de bois et de terres ?

— Pour le double de ces sommes.

— Eh bien ! Patrick, vendez tout ce qui n'est pas or et apportez-m'en le montant. Je ne veux garder à moi que ce castel et le champ qui l'entoure.

Deux jours après, les ordres de la pieuse Ketty étaient exécutés et le trésor était distribué aux pauvres au fur et à mesure de leurs besoins.

Ceci ne faisait pas le compte, dit la tradition, des commis-voyageurs du malin esprit, qui ne trouvaient plus d'âmes à acheter.

Aidés par un valet infâme, ils pénétrèrent dans la retraite de la noble dame et lui dérobèrent le reste de son trésor . . . en vain lutta-t-elle de toutes ses forces pour sauver le contenu de son coffre, les larrons diaboliques furent les plus forts. Si Ketty avait eu les moyens de faire un signe de croix, ajoute la légende Irlandaise, elle les eût mis en fuite, mais ses mains étaient captives—Le larcin fut effectué. Alors les pauvres sollicitèrent en vain près de Ketty dépouillée, elle ne pouvait plus secourir leur misère ;—elle les abandonnait à la tentation. Pourtant il n'y avait plus que huit jours à passer pour que les grains et les fourrages arrivassent en abondance des pays d'Orient. Mais, huit jours, c'était un siècle : huit jours nécessitaient une somme immense pour subvenir aux exigences de la disette, et les pauvres allaient, ou expirer dans les angoisses de la faim, ou, reniant les saintes maximes de l'Evangile, vendre à vil prix leur âme, le plus beau présent de la munificence du Seigneur tout-puissant.

Et Ketty n'avait plus une obole, car elle avait abandonné son châteux aux malheureux.

Elle passa douze heures dans les larmes et le deuil, arrachant ses cheveux couleur de soleil et meurtrissant son sein couleur du lis : puis elle se leva résolue, animée par un vif sentiment de désespoir.

Elle se rendit chez les marchands d'âmes.*

— Que voulez-vous ! dirent-ils.

— Vous achetez des âmes ?

— Oui, un peu malgré vous, n'eſt-ce pas, sainte aux yeux de saphir ?

— Aujourd'hui je viens vous proposer un marché, reprit-elle.

— Lequel ?

—J'ai une âme à vendre ; mais elle est chère.

— Qu'importe si elle eſt précieuse ? l'âme, comme le diamant, s'apprécie à sa blancheur.

— C'eſt la mienne, dit Ketty.

Les deux envoyés de Satan tressaillirent. Leurs griffes s'allongèrent sous leurs gants de cuir ; leurs yeux gris étincelèrent :—l'âme, pure, immaculée, virginale de Ketty ! . . . c'était une acquisition inappréciable.

— Gentille dame, combien voulez-vous ?

— Cent cinquante mille écus d'or.

— C'eſt fait, dirent les marchands : et ils tendirent à Ketty un parchemin cacheté de noir, qu'elle signa en frissonnant.

La somme lui fut comptée.

Dès qu'elle fut rentrée, elle dit au majordome :

— Tenez, diſtribuez ceci. Avec la somme que je vous donne les pauvres attendront la huitaine nécessaire et pas une de leurs âmes ne sera livrée au démon.

Puis elle s'enferma et recommanda qu'on ne vint pas la déranger.

Trois jours se passèrent ; elle n'appela pas ; elle ne sortit pas.

Quand on ouvrit sa porte, on la trouva raide et froide : elle était morte de douleur.

Mais la vente de cette âme si adorable dans sa charité fut déclarée nulle par le Seigneur : car elle avait sauvé ses concitoyens de la morte éternelle.

Après la huitaine, des vaisseaux nombreux amenèrent à l'Irlande affamée d'immenses provisions de grains.

La famine n'était plus possible. Quant aux marchands, ils disparurent de leur hôtellerie, sans qu'on sút jamais ce qu'ils étaient devenus.

Toutefois, les pêcheurs de la Blackwater prétendent qu'ils sont enchainés dans une prison souterraine par ordre de Lucifer jusqu'au moment où ils pourront livrer l'âme de Ketty qui leur a échappé. Je vous dis la légende telle que je la sais. — Mais les pauvres l'ont raconté d'âge en âge et les enfants de Cork et de Dublin chantent encore la ballade dont voici les derniers couplets :—

Pour sauver les pauvres qu'elle aime
Ketty donna
Son esprit, sa croyance même :
Satan paya
Cette âme au dévoûment sublime,
En écus d'or,
Disons pour racheter son crime,
Confiteor.

Mais l'ange qui se fit coupable
Par charité
Au séjour d'amour ineffable
Est remonté.
Satan vaincu n'eut pas de prise
Sur ce cœur d'or ;
Chantons sous la nef de l'église,
Confiteor.

N'est-ce pas que ce récit, né de l'imagination des poètes catholiques de la verte Erin, est une véritable récit de carême ?

The Countess Cathleen was acted in Dublin in 1899, with Mr. Marcus St. John and Mr. Trevor Lowe as the First and Second Demons, Mr. Valentine Grace as Shemus Rua, Master Charles Sefton as Teig, Madame San Carola as Mary, Miss Florence Farr as Aleel, Miss Anna Mather as Oona, Mr. Charles Holmes as the Herdsman, Mr. Jack Wilcox as the Gardener, Mr. Walford as a Peasant, Miss Dorothy Paget as a Spirit, Miss M. Kelly as a Peasant Woman, Mr. T. E. Wilkinson as a Servant, and Miss May Whitty as The Countess Cathleen. Some of the characters so represented have dropped out of the play during revision. The players had to face a very vehement opposition stirred up by a politician and a newspaper, the one accusing me in a pamphlet, the other in long articles day after day, of blasphemy because of the language of the demons or of Shemus Rua, and because I made a woman sell her soul and yet escape damnation, and of a lack of patriotism because I made Irish men and women, who, it seems, never did such a thing, sell theirs. The politician or the newspaper persuaded some forty Catholic students to sign a protest against the play, and a Cardinal, who avowed that he had not read it, to make another, and both politician and newspaper made such obvious appeals to the audience to break the peace, that a score or so of police were sent to the theatre to see that they did not. I had, however, no reason to regret the result, for the stalls, containing almost all that was distinguished in Dublin, and a gallery of artisans alike insisted on the freedom of literature.

After the performance in 1899 I added the love scene between Aleel and the Countess, and in this new form the play was revived in New York by Miss Wycherley, as well as being played a good deal in England and America by amateurs. Now at last I have made a complete revision to make it suitable for performance at the Abbey Theatre. The first two scenes are almost wholly new, and throughout the play I have

added or left out such passages as a stage experience of some years showed me encumbered the action ; the play in its first form having been written before I knew anything of the theatre. I have left the old end, however, in the version printed in the body of this book, because the change for dramatic purposes has been made for no better reason than that audiences—even at the Abbey Theatre—are almost ignorant of Irish mythology—or because a shallow stage made the elaborate vision of armed angels upon a mountain-side impossible. The new end is particularly suited to the Abbey stage, where the stage platform can be brought out in front of the proscenium and have a flight of steps at one side up which the Angel comes, crossing towards the back of the stage at the opposite side. The principal lighting is from two arc lights in the balcony which throw their lights into the faces of the players, making footlights unnecessary. The room at Shemus Rua's house is suggested by a great grey curtain—a colour which becomes full of rich tints under the stream of light from the arcs. The short front scene before the last is just long enough when played with incidental music to allow the scene set behind it to be changed. The play when played without interval in this way lasts a little over an hour.

The play was performed at the Abbey Theatre for the first time on December 14, 1911, Miss Maire O'Neill taking the part of the Countess, and the last scene from the going out of the Merchants was as follows :—

(MERCHANTS *rush out.* ALEEL *crawls into the middle of the room ; the twilight has fallen and gradually darkens as the scene goes on.*)

ALEEL

They're rising up—they're rising through the earth,
Fat Asmodel and giddy Belial,
And all the fiends. Now they leap in the air.

But why does Hell's gate creak so? Round and round,
Hither and hither, to and fro they're running.

(*He moves about as though the air was full of spirits.* OONA *enters.*)

Crouch down, old heron, out of the blind storm.

OONA

Where is the Countess Cathleen? All this day
Her eyes were full of tears, and when for a moment
Her hand was laid upon my hand, it trembled.
And now I do not know where she is gone.

ALEEL

Cathleen has chosen other friends than us,
And they are rising through the hollow world.
Demons are out, old heron.

OONA

God guard her soul.

ALEEL

She's bartered it away this very hour,
As though we two were never in the world.

(*He kneels beside her, but does not seem to hear her words. The* PEASANTS *return. They carry the* COUNTESS CATHLEEN *and lay her upon the ground before* OONA *and* ALEEL. *She lies there as if dead.*)

OONA

O, that so many pitchers of rough clay
Should prosper and the porcelain break in two!

(*She kisses the hands of* CATHLEEN.)

A PEASANT

We were under the tree where the path turns
When she grew pale as death and fainted away.

CATHLEEN

O, hold me, and hold me tightly, for the storm
Is dragging me away.

(OONA *takes her in her arms*. A WOMAN *begins to wail*.)

PEASANTS

Hush!

PEASANTS

Hush!

PEASANT WOMEN

Hush!

OTHER PEASANT WOMEN

Hush!

CATHLEEN (*half rising*)

Lay all the bags of money in a heap,
And when I am gone, old Oona, share them out
To every man and woman: judge, and give
According to their needs.

A PEASANT WOMAN

And will she give
Enough to keep my children through the dearth?

ANOTHER PEASANT WOMAN

O, Queen of Heaven, and all you blessed saints,
Let us and ours be lost, so she be shriven.

CATHLEEN

Bend down your faces, Oona and Aleel;
I gaze upon them as the swallow gazes
Upon the nest under the eave, before
She wander the loud waters. Do not weep
Too great a while, for there is many a candle
On the High Altar though one fall. Aleel,
Who sang about the dancers of the woods,
That know not the hard burden of the world,
Having but breath in their kind bodies, farewell!
And farewell, Oona, you who played with me
And bore me in your arms about the house
When I was but a child—and therefore happy,
Therefore happy even like those that dance.
The storm is in my hair and I must go.

(*She dies.*)

OONA

Bring me the looking-glass.

(A WOMAN *brings it to her out of inner room.* OONA *holds glass over the lips of* CATHLEEN. *All is silent for a moment, then she speaks in a half-scream.*)

O, she is dead!

A PEASANT

She was the great white lily of the world.

A PEASANT

She was more beautiful than the pale stars.

AN OLD PEASANT WOMAN

The little plant I loved is broken in two.

(ALEEL *takes looking-glass from* OONA *and flings it upon floor, so that it is broken in many pieces.*)

ALEEL

I shatter you in fragments, for the face
That brimmed you up with beauty is no more;
And die, dull heart, for you that were a mirror
Are but a ball of passionate dust again!
And level earth and plumy sea, rise up!
And haughty sky, fall down!

A PEASANT WOMAN

Pull him upon his knees,
His curses will pluck lightning on our heads.

ALEEL

Angels and devils clash in the middle air,
And brazen swords clang upon brazen helms.
Look, look, a spear has gone through Belial's eye!

(*A winged* ANGEL, *carrying a torch and a sword, enters from the* R. *with eyes fixed upon some distant thing. The* ANGEL *is about to pass out to the* L. *when* ALEEL *speaks. The* ANGEL *stops a moment and turns.*)

Look no more on the half-closed gates of Hell,
But speak to me whose mind is smitten of God,
That it may be no more with mortal things:
And tell of her who lies there.

(*The* ANGEL *turns again and is about to go, but is seized by* ALEEL.)

Till you speak
You shall not drift into eternity.

THE ANGEL

The light beats down; the gates of pearl are wide.
And she is passing to the floor of peace,
And Mary of the seven times wounded heart
Has kissed her lips, and the long blessed hair
Has fallen on her face; the Light of Lights

Looks always on the motive, not the deed,
The Shadow of Shadows on the deed alone.

(ALEEL *releases the* ANGEL *and kneels.*)

OONA

Tell them to walk upon the floor of peace,
That I would die and go to her I love;
The years like great black oxen tread the world,
And God the herdsman goads them on behind.
And I am broken by their passing feet.

The Land of Heart's Desire.—This little play was produced at the Avenue Theatre in the spring of 1894, with the following cast:—Maurteen Bruin, Mr. James Welch; Shawn Bruin Mr. A. E. W. Mason; Father Hart, Mr. G. R. Foss; Bridget Bruin, Miss Charlotte Morland; Maire Bruin, Miss Winifred Fraser· A Faery Child, Miss Dorothy Paget. It ran for a little over six weeks. It was revived in America in 1901, when it was taken on tour by Mrs. Lemoyne. It has since then been played several times professionally in America and England and a great many times in England and America by amateurs.

The Wanderings of Usheen.—The poem is founded upon the middle Irish dialogues of S. Patric and Usheen and a certain Gaelic poem of the last century. The events it describes, like the events in most of the poems in this volume, are supposed to have taken place rather in the indefinite period, made up of many periods, described by the folk-tales, than in any particular century; it therefore, like the later Fenian stories themselves, mixes much that is mediæval with much that is ancient. The Gaelic poems do not make Usheen go to more than one island, but a story in *Silva Gadelica* describes "four paradises," an island to the north, an island to the west, an island to the south, and Adam's paradise in the east. —W. B. Y., 1912.

Many of the poems in *Crossways*, certainly those upon Indian subjects or upon shepherds and fauns, must have

been written before I was twenty, for from the moment wh I began *The Wanderings of Usheen*, which I did at that age, I believe, my subject matter became Irish. Every time I have reprinted them I have considered the leaving out of most, and then remembered an old school friend who has some of them by heart, for no better reason, as I think, than that they remind him of his own youth. The little Indian dramatic scene was meant to be the first scene of a play about a man loved by two women, who had the one soul between them, the one woman waking when the other slept, and knowing but daylight as the other only night. It came into my head when I saw a man at Rosses Point carrying two salmon. "One man with two souls," I said, and added, "Oh, no, two people with one soul." I am now once more in "A Vision" busy with that thought, the antitheses of day and of night and of moon and of sun. *The Rose* was part of my second book, "The Countess Cathleen and Various Legends and Lyrics," 1892, and I notice upon reading these poems for the first time for several years that the quality symbolized as The Rose differs from The Intellectual Beauty of Shelley and of Spencer in that I have imagined it as suffering with man and not as something pursued and seen from afar. It must have been a thought of my generation, for I remember the mystical painter Horton, whose work had little of his personal charm and real strangeness writing me these words, "I met your beloved in Russell Square, and she was weeping," by which he meant that he had seen a vision of my neglected soul. I have altered several of these poems, *Cuchulain's Fight with the Waves*, *The Dedication to a Book of Stories*, and *To Ireland in the Coming Times*, considerably, and *The Song of the Old Pensioner* and *The Sorrow of Love* till they are altogether new poems. Whatever changes I have made are but an attempt to express better what I thought and felt when I was a very young man.—W. B. Y., 1925.

I have revised *The Ballad of the Foxhunter*, and once again *Cuchulain's Fight with the Sea*, and *The Dream of a Blessed Spirit* I have renamed *The Countess Cathleen in Paradise*, as it was once part of this play and is so much rewritten that it is almost a new poem.—W. B. Y., 1926.

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